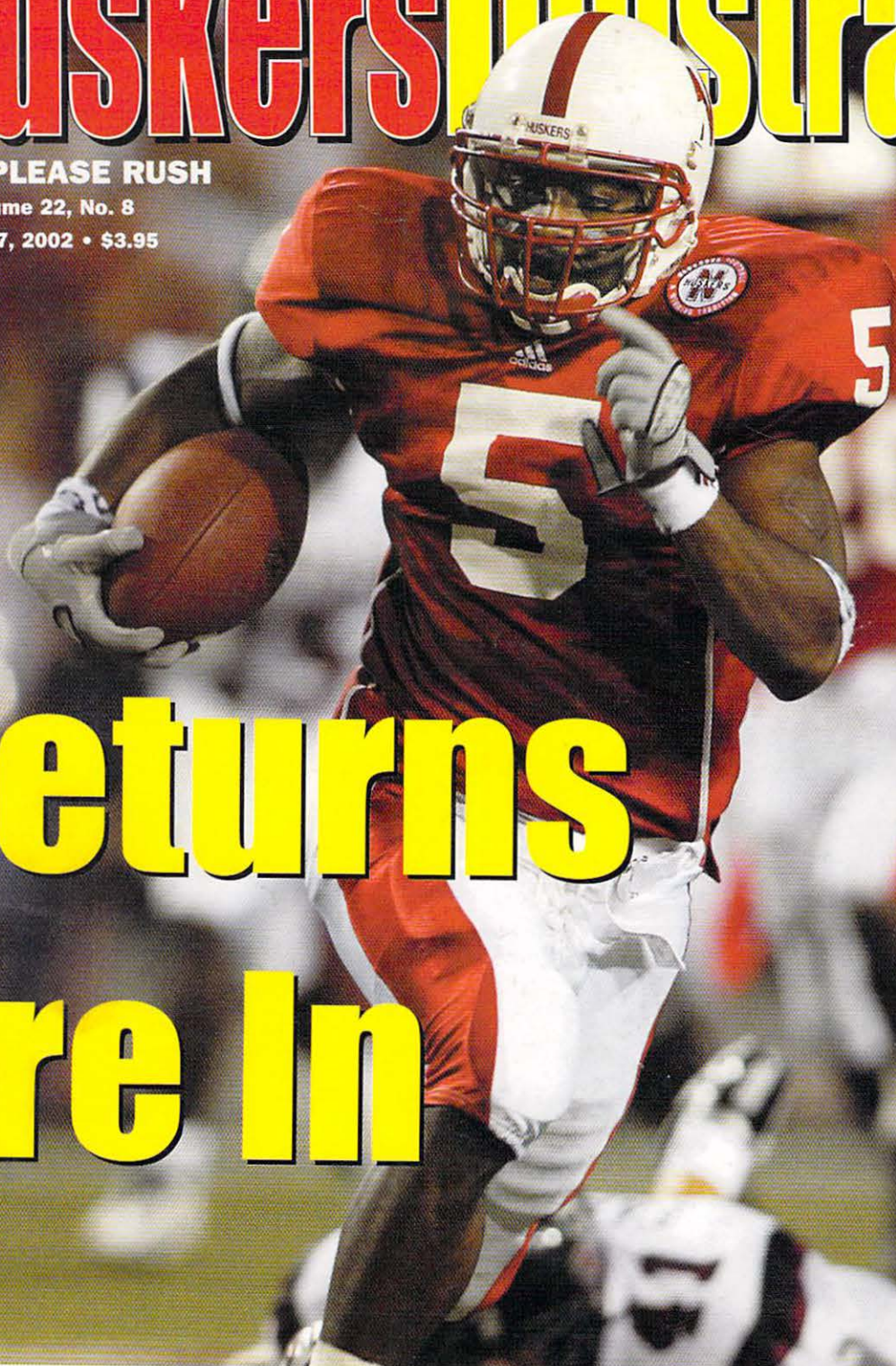


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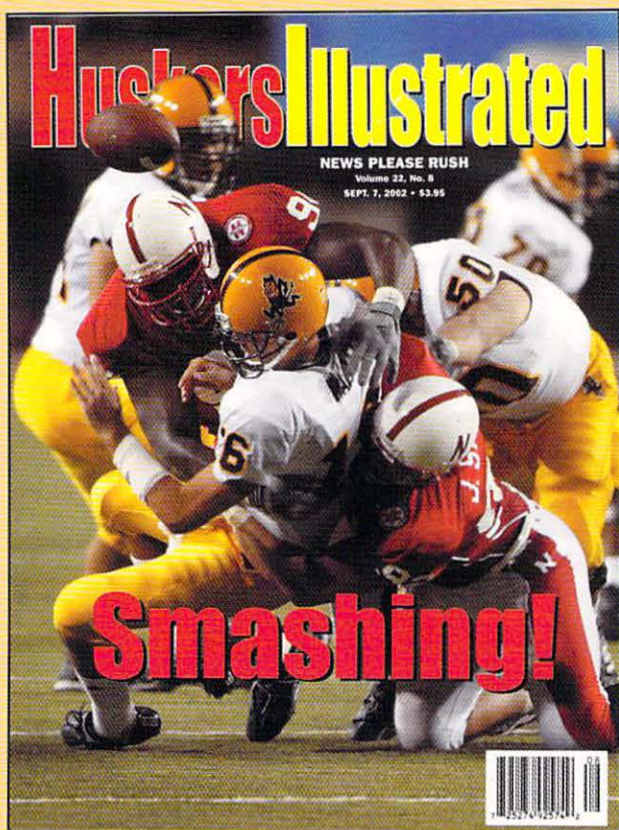
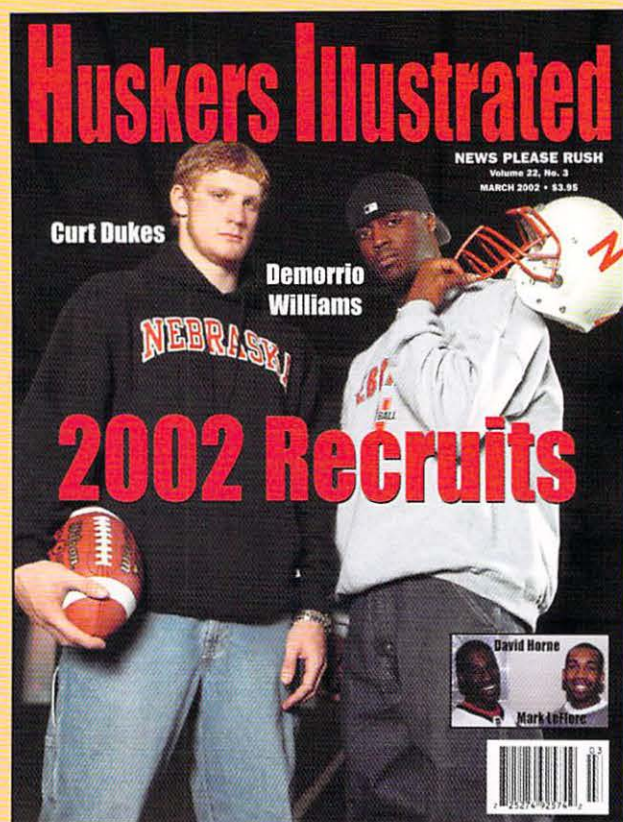
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Very Special

*Special teams provide big boost
for second straight game*



Brian Hill

NEBRASKA PUTS a great deal of time and effort into special teams.

Although the hard work doesn't always produce the intended results, it certainly has in the first two games of this season.

DeJuan Groce's two punt returns for touchdowns against Troy State equaled the Huskers' regular-season total last season. In last week's opener, Nebraska blocked two punts, which also equaled the 2001 total, and one resulted in a touchdown.

"On special teams, I thought we did a great job again, in a lot of the areas that we need to have special teams do a great job," Coach Frank Solich said after the 31-16 victory over Troy State. "Of course, the two punt returns kind of stand out, but again Josh (Brown) did a good job of kicking, Kyle (Larson) did a good job punting. We had good coverage and good protection and good kickoff returns.

"So special teams played a vital role in what we were able to get done."

Brown has been a perfect 3-for-3 on field goals and even had a 41-yarder taken away when Solich chose to go for the touchdown after a roughing-the-kicker penalty. The majority of Brown's kickoffs have been into or through the end zone.

Brown said he likes kicking at night.

"I don't know. There's just something about the night time. It brings that electricity to the game," Brown said. "It does help when you come out and the crowd

is a little alive, getting crazy."

The Huskers have opened the season with back-to-back night games, and the next two — Utah State and at Penn State — will also be under the lights.

And the outstanding efforts from Brown, Groce and the rest of the special teams players and defense will need to continue as the offense tries to get into a rhythm.

The defense, for the most part, turned in another solid effort. Troy State's only touchdowns came after a fumble deep in Nebraska territory and on a 73-yard drive to end the game.

"Defensively, we played well," Solich said. "We gave them some yards at the end of the game, but there were a lot of players being shuffled in and out at that time. Throughout the course of the game, the defense held us in there."

Speaking of the defense, the newest members of the Blackshirts are the focus of

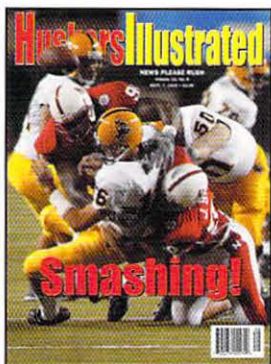
our main feature in this week's issue. Eighth of the 15 players awarded Blackshirts before the opener were first-timers.

The subject of our player profile is reserve tight end Will Dabbert, a senior who walked on at Nebraska instead of going to Yale. And our series on Husker assistants continues with a look at running backs coach Dave Gillespie.

As usual, we've got much, much more from the latest game, on a night when 2001 Heisman Trophy winner Eric Crouch's jersey was retired.

Crouch, the 14th Husker to have his jersey retired, received a loud ovation when he was introduced before the game. He also was inducted into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame on Friday.

"It's definitely a big honor. I couldn't be more happy that it happened at a place like Nebraska," Crouch said. "It's been an amazing run. It's great to have everything happen here at home." ■



ON THE COVER

Nebraska's DeJuan Groce takes a punt return back 72 yards for a touchdown in the third quarter. It was his second long return for a touchdown in the Huskers' 31-16 victory. Photo by Scott Bruhn

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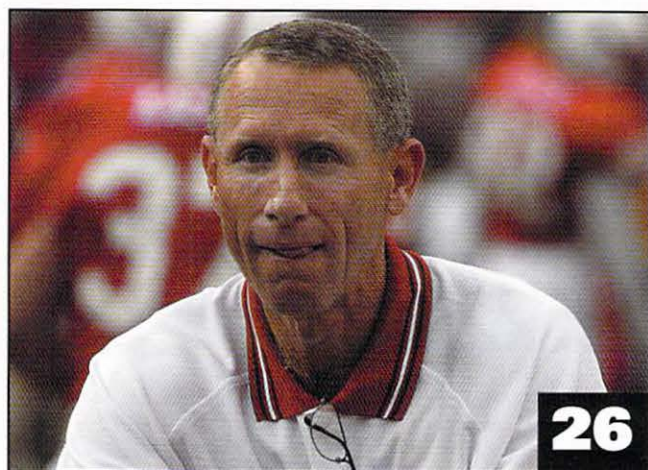
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Huskers Illustrated CONTENTS

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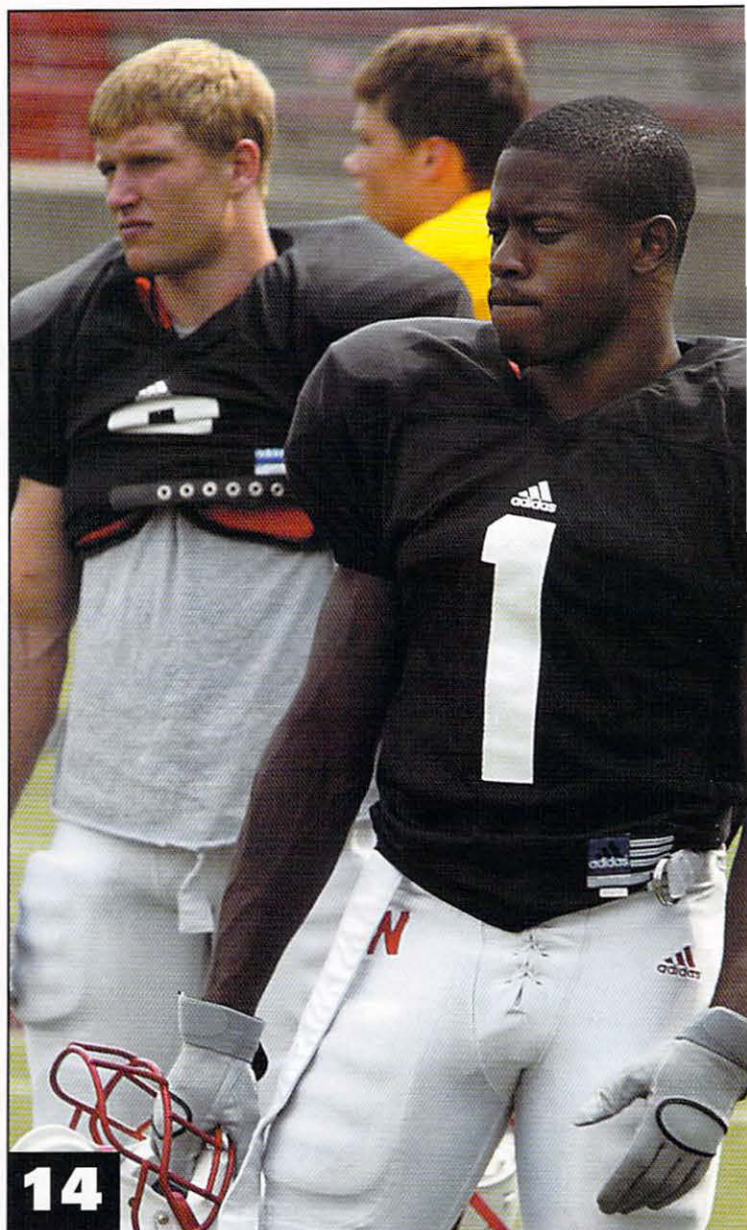
DEPARTMENTS

Letter From The Editor	4
NU Notebook	6
<i>Steve Safranek's attitude is characteristic of that of most walk-ons, or at least those who succeed.</i>	
Quick Hits	7
<i>An athlete's speed is a critical factor in recruiting, of course, but vertical jump also is significant.</i>	
State Of The Huskers	8
<i>The highlight of Patrick Kabongo's summer was a weeklong trip to Matamoros, Mexico.</i>	
From The West	10
<i>The road opener at Penn State should be indication of how far 2002 Huskers can go.</i>	
From The Beat	11
<i>It's clear that junior quarterback Jammal Lord is the Huskers' next leading man.</i>	
Player Profile	12
<i>Will Dabbert's college football career almost certainly would be finished now if he hadn't walked on at Nebraska.</i>	
Troy State Game Recap	17
4th and Inches	21
Scouting Report	22
Troy State Game Statistics	24
Side Out	30
<i>Geichaly Cepero sees everything coming together for an outstanding senior season.</i>	
Grid Recruiting	32
<i>With three of the top four players at the position in their final season, NU will be looking for help at rush end.</i>	
Crossword Puzzle, Huskernutz	36
Final Word	38



26 Coach's Corner

Former Husker player and recruiting coordinator Dave Gillespie knew that the chance to return to Nebraska was a great opportunity. *By Mike Babcock*



14 The 2002 Blackshirts

Nebraska's newest Blackshirts understand the significance and tradition of the special jerseys they wear during practice. *By Mike Babcock*

NEXT ISSUE

The Utah State review/Penn State preview issue will be mailed Monday, Sept. 9.

'Right Attitude'

Every Nebraska football player has to earn respect, regardless of his accomplishments in high school. But respect is particularly important for a walk-on. Ask Steve Safranek.

The junior from Omaha became a focus of attention during two-a-day practices after Chad Sievers, the top back-up to Barrett Ruud at middle linebacker, was sidelined by a knee injury.

Safranek hasn't forgotten how he felt when he arrived in the fall of 1999. "I was viewed (as) not just being a walk-on but (as) someone that didn't have a lot of respect," he said.

Respect can be reflected by finally getting a scholarship, of course. "But just to be able to make plays, to be smart out there, to know the calls, to know the defense, to give the offense a good look when you're on the scout team," also are ways to earn respect, according to Safranek.

Whether a walk-on or on scholarship, back-ups earn respect by being prepared, even though their prospects of playing are limited. That is difficult when practicing with the lower units.

"You always have a tendency to kind of play down to their level," Safranek said. "When you're one of the lower guys, it's very easy to be lackadaisical, to not pay attention. It's really easy if you're running third team to not pay attention when Coach (Craig) Bohl is explaining something."

"But you've got to have the right attitude; one play away and you're in there."

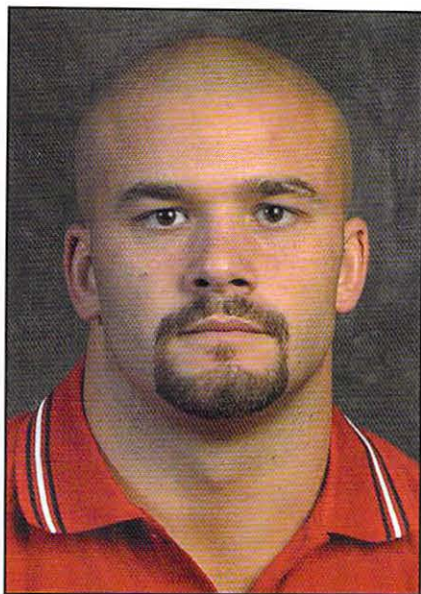
Some days it's easier to have the right attitude than others. "If anybody says they're doing it all the time, I think they're lying," said Safranek. "But you've got to be ready."

"If you're not ready, you're not going to play. If you're second string and you're not ready to go in and start, you're not going to start. You're going to let down your team. You're going to let down the defense. You're going to let down your folks. And you're going to let down the fans."

Safranek's attitude is characteristic of that of most walk-ons, or at least those who succeed.

He was realistic about his situation.

At Omaha Gross High School, "I felt I was a pretty good player," he



Junior Steve Safranek has earned one letter as a backup middle linebacker.

said. "I had a lot of letters, a lot of phone calls from Division I schools."

Colorado, Kansas and Iowa State were among those schools. But midway through his senior season, the letters stopped. "Obviously, they felt you're not a good enough player," he said.

"Something they saw on film wasn't good enough. I wasn't surprised by it. I never thought of myself as a scholarship athlete out of high school. I knew I wasn't. I knew my abilities. I knew I was a pretty good player and (that) I could probably walk on someplace. I could probably contribute some day."

"But I never viewed myself as a definite blue-chipper. I was just the average guy."

More specifically, he had average speed. "I'm not that fast. That's just a given," he said. "God didn't bless me with speed. He blessed me with intelligence, work ethic, things like that."

Speed is often a factor in separating scholarship recruits from walk-ons. And intelligence and work ethic often can separate the walk-ons who succeed from those who don't.

South Dakota State offered Safranek a scholarship, the only such offer he had. But he opted to walk on at Nebraska, pursuing a dream he

shares with countless others who grow up in the state.

Safranek says he was a Cornhusker fan as a youngster, but "I was never one of those guys that cried when we lost, anything like that. It wasn't one of those things where, 'I've got to go to Nebraska.' It didn't have an effect on my life like it obviously does now. I was a fan, not a die-hard fan, though."

Nevertheless, when Nebraska offered him the opportunity to walk on, he didn't hesitate.

Chad Stanley, a former walk-on and Cornhusker graduate assistant at the time, called him to say that the coaches had evaluated his high school film and would like him to walk on.

"I said yes right away," said Safranek. Stanley "said, 'We'll give you a call back next week for your decision.' I said, 'You don't need to call back, I'm coming.'"

The decision was easy. "Growing up in Nebraska, you play for the Huskers," Safranek said.

The Cornhuskers' 2002 roster, released the week of the opener, included at least 21 freshman walk-ons, 12 of whom might well share his attitude because they are from Nebraska.

Chase Anderson, RE, Lincoln (East)
Mark Brungardt, DB, Norfolk (Catholic)
Anthony Fisher, RE, Arapahoe
Ben Hansen, LB, Cedar Bluffs
Andy Kadavy, FB, Seward
Tyler Kenney, WR, Kearney (Amherst)
John Knopp, TE, Lincoln (Lincoln High)
Newton Lingenfelter, OL, Plainview
Nate Probasco, LB, Scribner (Scribner-Snyder)
Mitch Reeves, LB, Weston (Wahoo Neumann)
Joseph Rigoni, DB, Lincoln (Southeast)
Dusty Stamer, WB, Grand Island
Other freshman walk-ons include:
Stewart Bradley, LB, Salt Lake City, Utah (Highland)
Chris Bryant, DL, Aurora, Colo. (Smoky Hills)
Charlie Denman, LB, Rusk, Texas
Justin Haney, OL, Ojai, Calif. (Nordhoff)
Kristopher Lewin, RE, Miami, Fla. (Dade Christian)
Grant Mulkey, WR, Arlington, Texas
Nick Nicholson, LB, St. Joseph, Mo. (Central)
Seth Starkebaum, WR, Haxton, Colo.
Sam Wells, OL, Bloomington, Ill. (Normal Community) ■

WALK-ON IMPACT

The preseason depth chart included 29 players, among 94 listed, who came to Nebraska as walk-ons. That is approximately 30 percent, reflecting their value to the program.

Five starters walked on: strongside linebacker Scott Shanle, cornerback Pat Ricketts, rover Aaron Terpening, wingback Troy Hassebroek and punter Kyle Larson.

All five have earned scholarships.

Shanle (St. Edward), Ricketts (Omaha), Hassebroek (Lincoln) and Larson (Funk) are among 12 Cornhuskers from Nebraska who began the season as starters.

The others: split end Wilson Thomas (Omaha), offensive guards Mike Erickson (Omaha) and Wes Cody (Fremont), tight end Aaron Golliday (York), fullback Judd Davies (Omaha), rush end Chris Kelsay (Auburn), middle linebacker Barrett Ruud (Lincoln) and cornerback Lornell McPherson (Omaha).

PROPER PERSPECTIVE

The season's first depth chart, released the week of the Arizona State game, included Mike Stuntz's moving from the third quarterback listed to the second, ahead of Curt Dukes. The promotion attracted considerable attention. But "it's still the back-up quarterback," Stuntz said.

The sophomore from Council Bluffs, Iowa hasn't avoided media discussions of his competition with Dukes for the top back-up job behind Jammal Lord. "I'm usually pretty busy," said Stuntz. "But I'll end up watching the news. I read the newspaper. Sometimes the stuff can be used for motivation."

"You read about people who may not necessarily think you can get the job done, so you just let it roll off your back. It's not really helpful, but it's not really harmful, either. It's just kind of there."

"I'm not a reporter. I'm not going to try to be one. You read the newspaper and sometimes it's interesting. But I listen to the coaches. I don't let the media affect me."

"Whatever the coaches say takes precedence."

Every player has to deal with media attention. "If you're going to let that get to you, you can't possibly expect to play here on Saturday because something somebody writes is nothing compared to 80,000 people screaming at you, linebackers breathing down your throat," Stuntz said.

"You might as well just let it roll off you."

Such attention can be distracting, according to Dukes.

"It is sometimes," he said. "A lot of people ask me about the quarterback situation. I tell them the same thing, over and over. I have to wait for the coaches' decision."

"I don't watch the news. I don't read the papers. Sometimes they might get around and I'll read one or two things. But I try to stay away from it, let the coaches decide. I don't have a final say." ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

GO AHEAD AND JUMP

An athlete's speed is a critical factor in recruiting, of course, a fact reflected in the interest in 40-yard dash times. But an athlete's vertical jump also is significant.

The vertical jump "has become the No. 1 indicator of athletic ability in power sports," said Boyd Epley, Nebraska's director to athletic performance. And he has data to support that.



Trev Alberts

The Cornhuskers have changed their testing procedures over the years, but they have included the vertical jump since 1969. Trev Alberts, a unanimous All-America outside linebacker and the 1993 Butkus Award winner, holds the school record (all sports) in the vertical jump, 41.5 inches.

But "anyone who can jump over 30 inches, we'd sure like to know about him," Epley said.

Keven Lightner, a first-team all-conference offensive tackle in 1987, holds the school record for performance points in the vertical jump, 39.5 inches when he weighed 280 pounds.

If you're interested in how you would stack up against the Cornhuskers in the vertical jump, you can find a conversion table for performance points by logging on to www.huskerpower.com.

For the record, these are the heaviest Huskers in history, averaging 238 pounds per man.

FIRST GRAD STUDENT

The subject of this issue's State of the Huskers, Patrick Kabongo, is one of five players with degrees. The others are Dahrnan Diedrick, Ben Cornelsen, Demoiné Adams and Justin Smith.

George Andrews was the first Cornhusker in any sport to compete as a graduate student, doing so in 1978. Andrews, nicknamed the "Smiling Assassin," was an All-America defensive end, and Academic All-American. Prior to 1978, NCAA rules allowed only undergraduates to compete in athletics.

The rule was changed in January of 1978.

Andrews is among a nation-leading 59 Cornhuskers who have earned first-team Academic All-America first-team certificates, as well as 76 all-team certificates.

Notre Dame is second in first-team certificates, with 38.

Nebraska has been represented on the Verizon/CoSIDA Academic All-America first team for 15 consecutive seasons. Tight end Tracey Wistrom earned that honor last season.

His brother Grant was a two-time, first-team Academic All-American.

The Nebraska football program also leads the nation in NCAA Today's Top Eight Award winners (nine), NCAA postgraduate scholarship winners (30) and National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame Scholar-Athletes (19, including Tracey Wistrom last season).

Nebraska has led the Big 12 four of the past six years in graduation rate.

NEW FOOTBALLS

Nebraska is among several Division I-A teams using the Wilson "GST Game Ball" this season. The "GST" stands for "Game Saving Technology," according to a Wilson press release.



Jammal Lord

The ball, manufactured in Ada, Ohio, combines composite leather laces with a neoprene sub-layer for "unmatched grip and comfort," the release says. Its laces are made of soft, pebbled composite leather and are designed for better handling. Because of the sub-layer, the ball has deeper seams, which make the ball less likely to be fumbled, according to the manufacturer.

The footballs also have "friction-enhancing" stripes, and some players have called the balls "virtually 'fumble free,'" the release says.

The laces do seem to be "a lot thicker," Cornhusker quarterback Jammal Lord said.

"They help you get a lot better grip on the ball."

Ultimately, however, the change is of little importance to Lord. "I don't have a choice," he said. "I really don't have a choice. I just throw the balls they give me." ■

He Wants To Make A Difference

Church group trip to poor community in Mexico makes Kabongo appreciate what he has



Mike BABCOCK

THE HIGHLIGHT of Patrick Kabongo's summer was a weeklong trip to Matamoros, Mexico, in late July. "That was awesome," the Nebraska defensive tackle said.

His size, 6-foot-6 and 312 pounds, reinforced his use of "awesome."

The description of the trip could be misleading without a context, however.

He is a positive person, very up-beat, and in this case, he wasn't using "awesome" in a familiar, hip sense.

"Awe-inspiring" might have been a better way to express his feelings about the visit to a community located just across the border from Brownsville, Texas. Matamoros is "very poor, and people don't have hope," said Kabongo. "They're in survival mode, so it's kind of hard for them."

He took no joy in that, of course. He was among 21 with a youth group and sponsors from Lincoln's Christ's Place Church on a mission to Matamoros. And he came away with a better appreciation for what he has. "It's always good to see how good we've got it here," he said. "There are people that don't have food or basic needs. We've got it all, and sometimes we take it for granted."

"So it was good for me to go there. It was very good."

The trip was a reflection of Kabongo's personality. Like many of his teammates, he has been active in volunteer work during his three years at Nebraska, and his career goal is to work with youngsters, possibly as a counselor or even as a pastor. "Wherever the Lord leads me, I'll go," he said.

He anticipates that will be in the direction of young people.

"The most important thing in the world right now is impacting young people," he said. "There are so many distractions. I think it would be significant to impact them at a young age."

As young people get older, their behavior patterns become harder to break, he said.

His own behavior pattern as it relates to the classroom shows that he backs up his words with actions, breaking the stereotype of athletes who are indifferent to academics. Even though he came to Nebraska on a football scholarship, "school is No. 1 for me, and football is No. 2," he said.

When athletes say that, when they claim they are student-athletes, "I think some people don't really believe us," Kabongo said. "But we actually go to class and work

pretty hard."

Still not convinced? Well, Kabongo, a junior in eligibility, received a bachelor's degree, with a criminal justice major, in May, and is a graduate student, working toward a master's degree in family science. He could complete that degree when he completes his eligibility.

It would be easy to take a semester off, as an undeclared graduate student, but "I want to make sure I get as many credits as I can," he said. "They're paying for me. I might as well take advantage."

"It gives me two years to get a master's degree."

Four other Cornhuskers, all of them seniors, have received degrees: I-back Dahrran Diedrick, wingback Ben

Cornelsen, and rush ends Demoiné Adams and Justin Smith. Adams, like Kabongo, finished in three years. Bobby Newcombe is the only other Nebraska football player to do that.

That he had some credits from Vanier Collegiate Prep in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, "kind of helped out," said Kabongo, who is low-key about such a rare accomplishment.

Graduating in three years, when even non-athletes often need five, was difficult. "But you've got to be disciplined," he said, adding that Nebraska's academic support system also helped.

Plus, "I always push myself, give everything I've got," he said.

Such an approach has helped him on the football field as well. "He's come a long way,"

said defensive line coach Jeff Jamrog. "We're hoping he has a great fall for us."

Kabongo has come far enough to earn a Blackshirt, which is remarkable considering he played only two years of high school football and one in a youth league in Canada.

As in the classroom, he's been a quick study on the field.

Even so, "I've been patient for a while, thinking, 'I can't wait to play,'" he said. "This time is my time."

Kabongo had a "great summer," running and preparing for his junior season. That was his focus for all but the week in July, which was "good time off," he said.

It gave him an opportunity to reflect on his blessings, and to share with others.

"I expect a lot from myself," Kabongo said.

And that doesn't apply to just football and the classroom. ■



Defensive tackle Patrick Kabongo has earned a Blackshirt as a junior.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 20 years. Mike can be reached at MumblyDog@aol.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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So Many Unknowns

Road opener at Penn State should be indication of how far 2002 Huskers can go



Terry DOUGLASS

ALTHOUGH THE NEBRASKA football machine appears to be back on track, just how good this Cornhusker team really is remains a mystery.

The uniforms may look a little different, but there are plenty of signs that the formula for success is the same as Nebraska bids for its record 34th consecutive season with nine wins or more. Or, will the Cornhuskers be doomed to fall upon hard times when the schedule stiffens?

The Sept. 14 road opener at Penn State will apparently give us our first true indication of how far Nebraska can go. Even Coach Frank Solich admitted that he'd missed more sleep worrying about this year's season opener than for any other game in his career. Why?

"Probably because of so many unknowns," Solich said.

Chances are, it's going to take a while to get an accurate read on this year's edition of the Cornhuskers. In the meantime, here's what we know — and what we don't know — about Nebraska:

What we know: Jammal Lord is an exciting runner at the quarterback position. No one is saying, "Eric who?" just yet, but Lord has shown he's capable of some nifty moves and can make the most out of a broken play.

"Jammal is athletic and he is going to make some plays," Solich said. "He is going to be a little bit of a nightmare to control because of his ability to hurt you with a pass and also his ability to come out of the pocket and run."

What we don't know: If Lord can sit in the pocket and complete a pass in clutch situations. The guy has moves to burn, but sometimes, waiting patiently for the receivers to break open will be the key to keeping defenses honest.

What we know: Nebraska's special teams units are solid. With nearly every key player returning, this is no surprise. The ability to score when the offense is watching from the sidelines should give the Huskers a major boost.

"Our special teams should be good because we've got great athletes across the board," said Nebraska strongside linebacker Scott Shanle, who returned a blocked punt for a touchdown in the season opener. "We expect to make a lot of big plays this season."

What we don't know: If all of Nebraska's players who are performing double duty can stay healthy. For instance, DeJuan Groce might be one of the best punt return men in the country, but can his body endure another entire season in such a dangerous role? Certainly, the Huskers need their senior captain in the secondary.

What we know: With three new starters, Nebraska is a little green on the offensive line. Although it will take some time for the unit to mesh, senior center John Garrison has been pleased with the initial results.

"I don't think we've had many major breakdowns," Garrison said. Certainly, things have gone better than last season when the Huskers were tackled for losses 15 times in

their opening game against Texas Christian.

What we don't know: If this year's offensive line can thrive without a superstar. Like Dominic Raiola before him, Tionu Fonoti gave Nebraska an All-America performer to rely on before each left a year early to enter the NFL draft. Coaches say redshirt freshman tackle Richie Incognito has tons of potential, but right now, this year's version of the Nebraska Pipeline will have to get it done without a superstar up front.

What we know: The Nebraska defense is hungry. After an embarrassing collapse in their final two games last season, the Blackshirts are highly motivated to regain their reputation. So far, the defensive line looks more athletic and weakside linebacker Demorrio Williams appears to be as good as advertised.

What we don't know: Does Nebraska's defense have an answer for a big physical team that wants to line it up and run right at the Blackshirts — just as Colorado a year ago?

Another question is if the Huskers could sustain an injury at cornerback, having already lost potential starter Willie Amos to a knee injury last spring.

What we know: Following back-to-back lopsided losses to Colorado (62-36) and Miami (37-14), national college football analysts had a field day with Nebraska. Two major publications — Sports Illustrated and The Sporting News — listed the Huskers as a program on the decline. With no Eric Crouch at quarterback and Fonoti leaving for the NFL, some have predicted doom and gloom for the Huskers.

What we don't know: If Nebraska can rebuild its confidence. The Huskers have looked like the Huskers of old against lesser opponents, but what happens when they run up against a team with a talent level equal to or greater than

theirs? No doubt, the memories from last season's trips to Boulder and the Rose Bowl still linger.

What we know: Solich entered the season tied for the third-best coaching start in NCAA Division I-A history. Now in his fifth go-around as head coach, Solich appears more confident than ever. He no longer feels the need to explain his every move but is satisfied to let his decisions stand on their own.

What we don't know: If Solich can guide the Huskers to a successful season in what many think could be his toughest coaching job yet. That includes his injury-plagued rookie season in 1998 when Nebraska finished 9-4.

What we know: Nebraska's road schedule looks dicey. Trips to Penn State, Iowa State, Texas A&M, Oklahoma State and Kansas State could all potentially result in losses.

What we don't know: How good is the competition? History would indicate that the Huskers will again be solid at home, but can they finish above .500 on the road? Indeed, that could be the key to Nebraska's season. ■



Frank Solich's fifth season as head coach could be his toughest.

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the Grand Island Independent. He can be reached at tdbdouglass@netzero.net.

Solid Start

Lord, other Husker newcomers provide a glimpse of things to come



Curt McKEEVER

THE CURTAIN-CALLING performances came often as Nebraska kicked off its 112th season of football. But with every long-running hit, there must be a star, and it's clear Jammal Lord is the Huskers' next leading man.

It would have been hard for the 6-foot-2, 218-pound junior quarterback from Bayonne, N.J., to have a better starting debut than the one he produced in NU's 48-

10 win against Arizona State.

Showing his ability to improvise and be elusive, Lord ran 17 times for 103 yards. Statistically, that gave him a better opening-night performance than any of NU's last three quarterbacks — Eric Crouch, Scott Frost and Tommie Frazier — had in their first starts.

Though his passing numbers were not nearly as shining (five completions in 13 attempts for 33 yards and one touchdown), Lord's tell-tale value to Nebraska's offense showed up in the Huskers having played their first turnover-free season-opener since 1974.

"It all starts with the quarterback," NU quarterbacks coach Turner Gill said. "The other guys look at his face, look at his body language, his manner, how he calls the play."

"I was very pleased the way he handled it. There's nothing I see but good things ahead."

Nebraska needs to keep its quarterback under tight security, though. Without him, the Huskers aren't likely to be serious challengers for the Big 12 North Division crown.

If you don't think he's that valuable, consider that against Arizona State, NU was 6-for-15 on third-down conversions. Lord ran for two of those and threw for two more.

"When we decide a guy's the No. 1 quarterback, we expect him to have that poise," Gill said.

Maybe so, but Lord's case was far from the typical step in and become the next Husker hero kind of story.

Imagine the pressure of replacing a four-year starter, a local boy at that, who went on to win a Heisman Trophy.

"There was probably no college athlete in this country under more pressure than what he was," Coach Frank Solich said. But "he played as I hoped — as I had expected."

How could that be the case? Isn't this an offense lacking identity and consistency because it's breaking in so many top-unit players?

Did not the defense dominate during the two preseason games this fall?

Normal is the guy who has taken charge in the huddle. It's a good relationship and communication with players in the huddle. They will play hard for him," Solich said. Lord is athletic, and he is going to make some plays.

He is going to be a little bit of a nightmare to control because of his ability to hurt you with a pass and his ability to come out of the pocket and run."

Indeed, Lord has been blessed with an abundance of athletic ability. His early-step speed combined with an ability to change direction is going to leave a lot of would-be defenders reaching at air.

What we'll continue to learn more about is how good his feel for the game is — whether he has the touch for checking out of bad plays, so he isn't continually having to run from pressure.

Gill doesn't seem to be squirming over that thought.

"People are going to be entertained," he said. "They're going to enjoy watching him play."

There are a lot of other newcomers in the Huskers' cast whom Gill could be mentioning, too.

Particularly on the defense.

The preseason projections that Nebraska would be much stronger up front were correct.

A steady shuffle of redshirt freshmen Le Kevin Smith and Titus Adams, and junior Patrick Kabongo, with starters Jon Clanton and Ryon Bingham, left Arizona State on fumes.

Sophomore middle linebacker Barrett Ruud led the Huskers with eight tackles in his starting debut. T.J. Hollowell, a junior, had four tackles while splitting time with Demorrio Williams at weakside linebacker.

Williams, a junior college transfer, stood out as being capable of impacting a game much like Terrell Farley did when he spearheaded the efforts of the 1995 national champions. Williams broke up a pass, made a few tackles, blocked a punt that was returned for a TD and recovered another that led to an easy score.

"That's what they recruited me for. They wanted a guy that could come in here and make plays," he said.

While he left Memorial Stadium impressed by Nebraska's talent, Arizona State Coach Dirk Koetter marveled as much over the Huskers' defensive plan.

"They confused us having nine guys standing up at the line of scrimmage and running some cross blitzes. We didn't prepare for that," Koetter said. "We'd never seen them do that."

Those words would have brought a smile to Williams.

"Like Jammal says, however we can get the win, we're going to get the win," he said. "People are doubting us — (but) we're going to surprise a lot of people."

Maybe even their coach.

"I probably slept less before this than any game in my career, probably because of so many unknowns out there," Solich said. "We do have to prove ourselves, there's no question about that. (But) we're going to like a lot of things that we see."

Starting with Lord. ■



Jammal Lord rushed for 103 yards and threw one touchdown pass.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Not Yale, but . . .

Senior tight end chose to walk on at Nebraska instead of Ivy League school

Will Dabbert's college football career almost certainly would be finished now if he hadn't walked on at Nebraska. His second choice was Yale, where student-athletes don't redshirt.

"They want you to get your degree in four years," said Dabbert, a fifth-year senior tight end from Lincoln, Neb. "Academics are something they definitely stress there."

Dabbert was pointing out the obvious. Yale and academic achievement are synonymous, a point of emphasis when the Ivy League school recruits athletes, in this case football players.

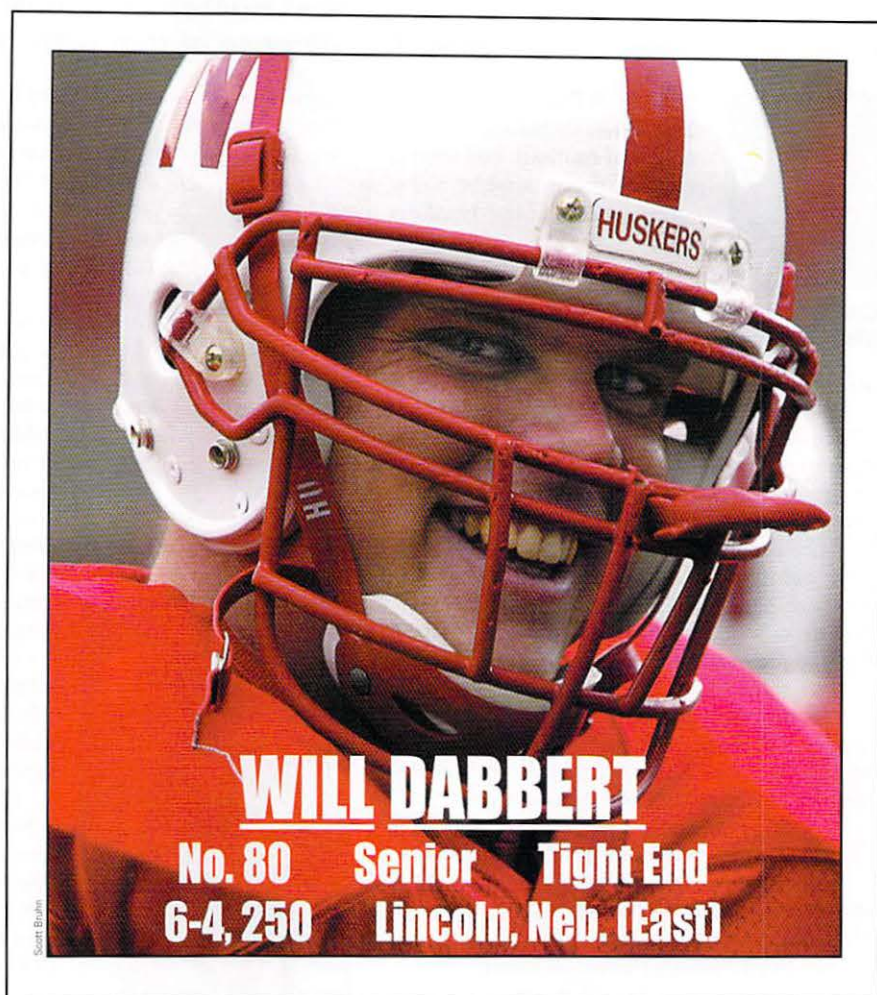
"I'd say the thing they talk about the most is the academic tradition. You leave with a Yale degree and you're pretty much set for life," Dabbert said. "That's pretty much what they say."

And that's pretty much the case.

Dabbert was serious enough in his consideration of Yale that he applied and was accepted, and he and his family made a recruiting visit to the campus in New Haven, Conn. The campus was "neat," he said. And so was the Yale Bowl, the Bulldogs' 88-year-old football stadium.

Yale, which competes in Division I-AA, also offered him a better opportunity to play. What it didn't offer was scholarship aid. None of the Ivy League schools do.

And that was a significant consideration. According to statistics on the university's official website, the average yearly expense for an undergrad-



uate student at Yale in 1998, including tuition and fees and room and board, was approximately \$31,000. And the average has increased.

So expense was a major factor in his decision to walk on at Nebraska. But the decision was based on more than just the cost, which was "horrible," Dabbert said with a smile. "I'd say it was close for a while. But when I put everything together, Nebraska was the best fit for me."

The determining factor "was proximity to home," he said, and the opportunity to be a part of the Nebraska football tradition, "being around top-notch coaches and athletes."

"Being a part of this program has always been kind of a dream of mine."

At the same time, Nebraska could meet his academic needs. He is a biological sciences major, with a minor in business and a 3.884 cumulative grade-point average.

Dabbert had no illusions about the task he faced as a walk-on, arriving when the Cornhuskers' scholarship recruiting class included tight ends Aaron Golliday and Jon Bowling.

"I knew I probably wouldn't get a real good chance right away," he said. "But there are a lot of guys here who put in their time, and by junior or senior year, they're getting chance."

He was the fourth tight end listed on the preseason depth chart.

Dabbert has worked hard and become a good blocker. He makes "very few mistakes," said receivers

coach Ron Brown, a graduate of Brown University, also an Ivy League school.

Beyond that, however, Dabbert is a "model citizen, a young man that has great faith in God," Brown said. "He's a great role model, gives back to the community. He epitomizes what you're looking for in terms of the high-character student-athlete you'd like to have in this program."

He is just the third four-time member of the Brook Berringer Citizenship Team, an honor based on community service. The first two were Dan Alexander and Jeff Hemje.

Dabbert will graduate in December, after which he plans to enroll in dental school. He has known since high school that he wanted a career in the health professions.

"Nebraska has a really good dental school," said senior quarterback Joe Chrisman, Dabbert's roommate since their redshirt freshman year. "I'm sure that came into play."

Chrisman, who is headed for medical school, also attracted interest from Yale, as well as from Harvard

and Brown. He never visited any of those schools, however, because of the expense.

Chrisman understands the prestige of attending an Ivy League school, or even having the opportunity. But Dabbert never talks about the fact that he almost went to Yale, Chrisman said.

"You have to ask him. I've never heard him brag and say, 'Well, I got accepted by Yale.' He doesn't talk about it much. I think he's really glad he made the decision he did. It's working out well."

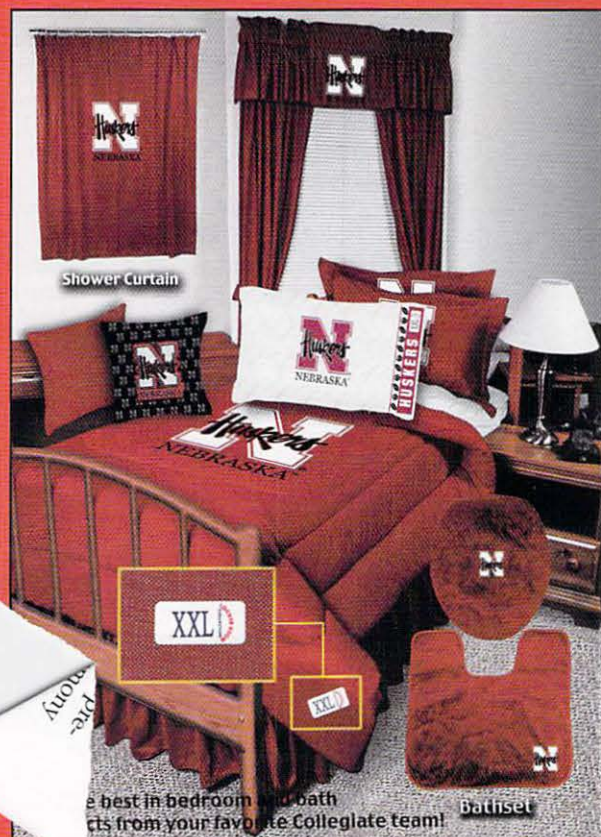
Dabbert spent his first two seasons on the scout team. "People will look at that and say, 'Man, how could you come here and just be on the scout team?' But I'll tell you what, those first two years really helped me in terms of being disciplined, having the courage to get up every day and say, 'I'm going to give my best, try to make the defense better.' I really did learn a lot those first couple of years."

Education isn't limited to the classroom. "It's what you make of it," he said. Wherever you are. ■

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Not Just



NU's newest Blackshirts understand significance

By Mike Babcock

Only Philip Bland could see the images. Anyone else saw only a blank wall.

He stood in a hallway outside the South Stadium locker room, where the walls are decorated with team records and photographs of former Cornhuskers in the NFL. The section of wall at which he stared, however, was unadorned. It was gray and provided a backdrop for his personal movie.

In his imagination, he watched highlights of the defensive players who have preceded him at Nebraska, Mike Brown, Grant Wistrom, Jason Peter, Trev Alberts, Rich Glover.

"There are so many great players who also wore a Blackshirt," Bland said, replaying otherwise invisible images in his mind. "You're not only representing yourself and the team but also the people that played before you. That makes it so special, and so awesome."

Earlier that day, during a meeting of the entire defense in the second-floor auditorium, Bland had been awarded a black practice jersey for the first time. He was among 15 to whom defensive coordinator Craig Bohl presented the jerseys in a brief ceremony that Bohl declined to describe.

Bohl answered reporters' questions with one word. "Private," he said.

Eight of the 15 players who earned Blackshirts on the Tuesday before the opener against Arizona State were first-timers. And they described aspects of the ceremony.

Sophomore free safety Philip Bland wears his Blackshirt, along with a Blackshirt insignia on his helmet.

a Jersey



Among the 15 blackshirts are (from left) cornerback Pat Ricketts, rover Aaron Terpening and cornerback Lornell McPherson.

Bohl talked about the significance of Blackshirts, they said, and showed videotaped highlights of defensive plays made by those Bland could see on the bare wall after practice.

During the highlights, the names of those who would be getting blackshirts flashed on the screen. Bohl pulled out a box and handed out the coveted jerseys.

Trett Ruud's No. 38 was the first. "I was actually kind of nervous (before), I don't know, for some reason I was a little jumpy, I guess," said the sophomore middle linebacker.

As soon as he got the jersey, he wanted to put it on. "I've never been

more excited at practice, ever," Ruud said. "It wasn't so much to practice, (but) just to get out there and put my jersey on.

"I could have just come out and sat around for a while, put it over my back."

Ruud was unique among the 15. His father, Tom, also was a Blackshirt.

"I know a lot about the tradition here. That's why it's special for me," he said. "I've been going to these games since I was about 2- or 3-years old. I know the players who have had these."

So does junior rush end Trevor Johnson, another of the first-time

Blackshirts. Johnson, like Ruud, is from Lincoln. "It's a real awesome feeling to be part of the family," said Johnson.

The other new Blackshirts were from out of state: rover Aaron Terpening, nose tackle Ryon Bingham, tackle Patrick Kabongo and weakside linebackers T.J. Hollowell and Demorrio Williams.

But they understand the significance of a Blackshirt, "without question," Bohl said. "As a coaching staff, we articulated exactly what we were looking for. They totally understand."

Hollowell was told during his recruitment. "Even before I got here, I

wanted one," he said.

A friend in Beckville, Texas, who "watched a lot of football games," told Williams.

Terpening and Bingham said they both knew about the Blackshirts before they got to Nebraska, though neither could remember his first exposure to the tradition.

"I didn't know much about Nebraska," said Kabongo. But the junior from Montreal, Quebec, Canada quickly learned. "After I came here, they let me know Blackshirts are the real deal.

"On this defense, you've got to be the real deal, no matter what."

Blackshirts are awarded on performance, so more than 11 can wear them during a season. The 15 who earned them prior to the opening game included three rush ends, three interior linemen and three cornerbacks, as well as the two weakside linebackers, Hollowell and Williams.

"I guess it's a good ending to the story to see us both with Blackshirts," Hollowell said.

Getting a Blackshirt "was a real weight off my shoulders," he said. "I never doubted myself. I figured we both would get one. But I didn't know when we (both) would."

At least one of them would have gotten a Blackshirt as the starter. But they shared the top spot on the depth chart. "It was something very special to me," said Williams, who arrived at Nebraska in January as a transfer from Kilgore, Texas, Junior College. "That's what I was hoping for.

"If one would have gotten it and the other one wouldn't have, I don't think there would have been any negativity about it. But I'm kind of happy we both got them."

Rush ends Chris Kelsay and Demoiné Adams, tackle Jon Clanton, strongside linebacker Scott Shanle and cornerbacks DeJuan Groce, Pat Ricketts and Lornell McPherson had Blackshirts last season.

Even so, it's still special for them, as well as for the defensive coaches. Bohl still gets excited during the presentation ceremony. "I sure do, simply because I can remember as a player what that all meant when the coaches handed those out, what it all represented," he said.

"It's moving for our coaches and for our players."

None of the new Blackshirts seemed more excited than Bland, who grew up in the shadow of Colorado's Folsom Field and whose father, Richard, played for the Buffaloes.

Ironically, Bland's first exposure to the Blackshirt tradition could be traced to his dad, who "always talked about the Blackshirts, how they beat the heck out of CU," Bland said. "That's what he said when I got my first (recruiting) letter from Nebraska. 'Phil, those are the Blackshirts.'"

His dad's respect for the Blackshirts only goes so far, Bland said. Being a Colorado letterman, his support of Nebraska hasn't been overly demonstrative. He won't wear a block "N" logo and when he wears red, he claims it is the red of Philip's high school in Boulder, Fairview.

Having a Blackshirt, however, "could be what converts him to be a true Nebraska fan," Philip said. "He might not wear the 'N' yet, but he'd

better be wearing something that says Blackshirts."

On the Monday before Blackshirts were distributed, he and his dad talked on the phone, as they regularly do. "He was like, 'If you get one, I'm going out and get some champagne, pop some champagne.' I thought that was nice," said Bland. "My dad knows how much it means."

As he talked, Bland watched the images of past Blackshirts flash across the wall on the other side of the hallway. "Obviously, man, it means so much to me," he said.

The day he committed to Nebraska, he said, "I want to be a Blackshirt."

Now he is, and "it's something that's going to be with me forever," he said. ■



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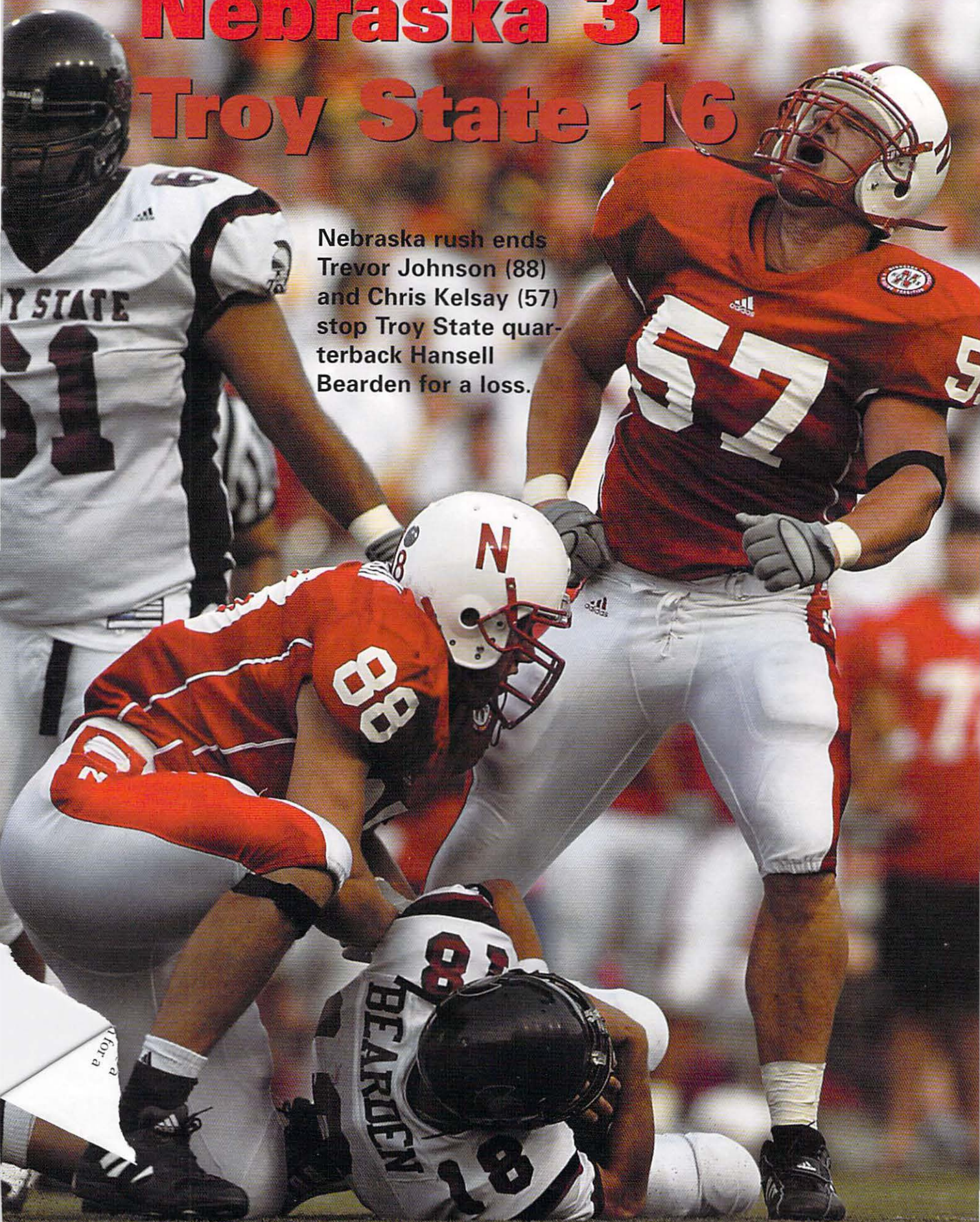
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Nebraska 31 Troy State 16

Nebraska rush ends Trevor Johnson (88) and Chris Kelsay (57) stop Troy State quarterback Hansell Bearden for a loss.



Groce En



DeJuan Groce had plenty of reasons to smile Saturday night against Troy State. The senior cornerback from Garfield Heights, Ohio, returned two punts for touchdowns and intercepted two passes..

Punt returns, interceptions help save day for Huskers

By Mike Babcock

Photos by Scott Bruhn

Take away DeJuan Groce's two punt returns and Nebraska would have won by a single point. Of course, take away a Troy State touchdown against the Cornhusker reserves with 10 seconds remaining and the margin of victory would have been a slightly more impressive 21.

You can put whatever spin you want on the 31-16 victory. The truth is, it was non-descript, a winning effort to be sure, but one that might have posed more questions than it answered.

According to coaching wisdom, a team makes its most improvement from the first to second game. But Nebraska Coach Frank Solich hedged when asked if that were true in this case.

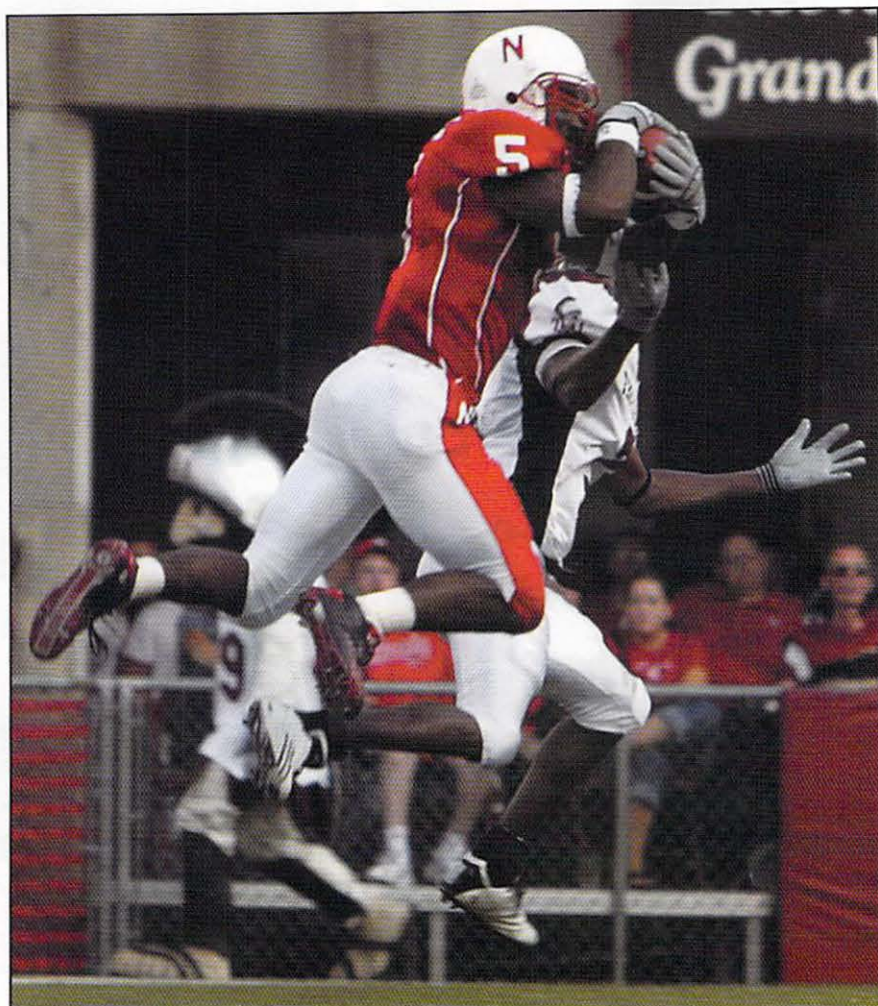
"It'll be a very interesting film to watch," he said.

What he would see was a Troy State team in just its second season in NCAA Division I-A trailing Nebraska by only 14-10 with 13:30 remaining in the third quarter. And seven of those 14 points were result of Groce's 83-yard punt return touchdown late in the first half.

Groce's second punt return also went for a touchdown — but more about that later.

After Troy State cut the lead to four, and stunned a Memorial Stadium audience of 77,831 in the process, Solich would see his team respond in an encouraging way.

nough



DeJuan Groce makes a leaping interception in front of Troy State's Heyward Skipper in the first quarter.

Nebraska overcame a penalty for an illegal block on the kickoff return and put together a 16-play, 91-yard touchdown drive, featuring the running of Jammal Lord and Dahrran Diedrick.

But even that was a little misleading because had it not been for a roughing-the-kicker penalty, the drive would have produced only 10 points. Josh Brown was injured, after kicking a 41-yard field goal, and Solich decided to take the rest off the scoreboard and continue to the end zone.

The Cornhuskers needed four plays to cover the final 12 yards, with the critical play being a 7-yard pass from Lord to Josh Davis on third-

down-and-6 from the Troy State 8-yard line.

Diedrick finished off the drive from 1 yard out, and Nebraska had some breathing room.

The drive was pivotal. "The momentum was switching," said Solich. "It wasn't just a clean drive down the field. But certainly it was good to see us put something together."

A little less than five minutes later, Groce returned a second punt for a touchdown, this time a 72-yarder, to set a school record and tie an NCAA record, shared by several players.

"DeJuan had a superlative game," Solich said. "He also did a great job from the defensive end of it. He

Husker Player of the Game

No Time to Take a Break

Defensive coordinator Craig Bohl met DeJuan Groce when he came to the sideline after his second punt return for a touchdown with 1:50 remaining in the third quarter.

Bohl recounted their conversation during a post-game interview.

"Hey, you're going back in there," he told Groce. "You're not tired?"

"No coach," Groce replied, "I'm fine."

Groce's recollection of the exchange was slightly different. But the essence was the same. No way was he going to take a break simply because he might have been a little winded.



DeJuan Groce

"I'm on defense," he said. "That's what I do."

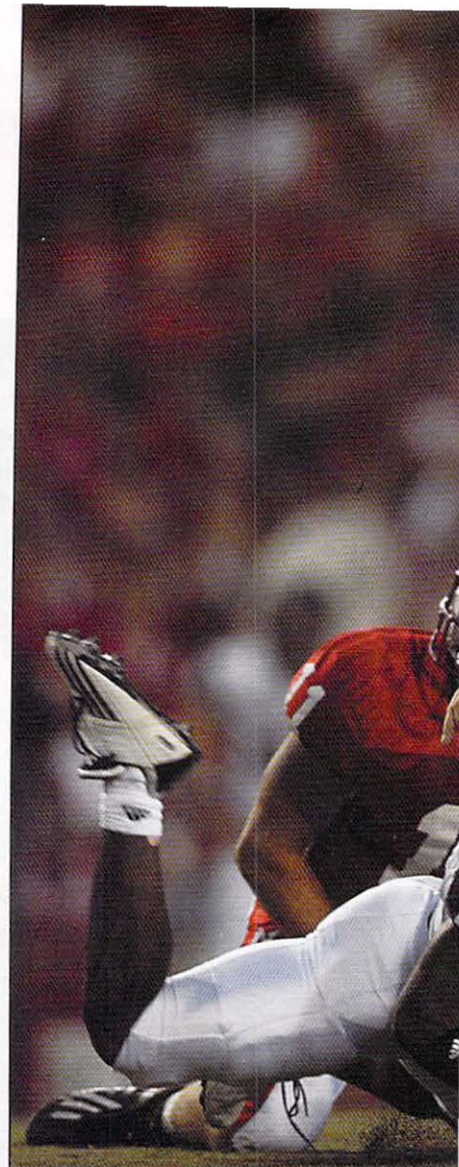
He also is proving himself to be a special special-teams player.

In 18 years of coaching, Bohl said, he has come to realize that "great players make great coaches." And Groce is such a player. Groce is "developing into a huge game-breaker."

Despite his two pass interceptions and NCAA record-tying two punt returns for touchdowns, Groce said he wasn't ruling out the possibility of an even better performance this season.

"You never know; I might do something else spectacular," he said.

"Hopefully, I'll get a better game than this. I think I was kind of in a zone." ■



Sophomore middle linebacker Chad Sievers (left). Sievers saw his first action of the season when he tackled Nebraska's Barrett Ruud. Troy State's Adrian Ghent slams Barrett Ruud, resulting in a roughing-the-kicker penalty this week.

should really be congratulated for just an outstanding performance."

The senior cornerback intercepted two passes in the first quarter to keep the pesky Trojans at bay. "We needed something to up-lift the team," said Groce. "This is the last show for me. I've been here a long time, seen a lot of great players come through here, and I'm just trying to do what they did."

"I just went out there and played with my heart."

Groce received a figurative game ball from his teammates afterward. Senior split end Wilson Thomas made the presentation in the locker room. "It's just gratifying," Groce said.

Middle linebacker Barrett Ruud probably would have had an interception, too, if not for the cast on his left hand. A bone in the hand, which

Ruud "didn't know the word for," was broken on the second play of the game, but Ruud returned in the second half. "It's just a small break," he said.

"It hurt a little bit, but it didn't hurt when I thudded the ball."

Some players wouldn't have returned, said rush end Chris Kelsay. But Ruud "wasn't going to let down his teammates and fellow Blackshirts. Barrett came back as strong as if he had both hands."

Chad Sievers, who has been sidelined with a knee injury, filled in until Ruud returned.

Troy State gained 347 yards, to Nebraska's 313, including 199 rushing.

"They threw up some numbers on us," Kelsay said. "The total yards were kind of a concern."

However, 73 of the yards came on the final touchdown drive.

"I was pleased with how our guys continue to battle," said defensive coordinator Craig Bohl. But the defensive effort overall was "kind of a little bit of a mixed bag."

"We got some guys out of position against some good skill players."

Troy State made nine plays that gained 15 or more yards.

By comparison, Nebraska managed only four such plays, the most by Lord — pass completions of 62 and 15 yards and an 18-yard run for the first touchdown with 8:55 left in the first quarter. "We haven't demonstrated we're a big-play offense," Solich said. "No question we need to improve."

As was the case against Arizona State, Lord led the Cornhuskers in



...les Troy State running back DeWhitt Betterson and had six tackles filling in for the injured ... into Nebraska kicker Josh Brown (above), ... ept a Husker drive alive.

rushing with 92 yards on 23 carries, a total Solich would like to see be reduced. One way that can happen is if Nebraska is more effective on first and second down, so Lord isn't constantly facing third-and-long.

Lord completed 8-of-15 passes for 114 yards, with one interception. But he wasn't sacked.

The pass protection was better than the previous week, Lord said. "I had more time."

Lord agreed about the importance of the 91-yard touchdown drive, on which he carried six times for 32 yards. "We just know when it's time to do our thing," he said. "It was real big."

So were Groce's punt returns and interceptions.

"He saved the game," said Lord. "But that's what it's all about." ■

4TH & 1 NCHES

Notes And Quotes From The Troy State Game

DELAYED REDSHIRT

Benard Thomas has decided it would be in his best interests to redshirt this season. The junior rush end from East Palo Alto, Calif., warmed up before the Arizona State game but then took off his uniform and watched the game from the sideline in street clothes.

"We really left it up to him," Coach Frank Solich said.

The subject had been discussed at length, so the decision didn't come as a surprise.

"We felt he could work his way into the mix of this thing this year," said Solich. "But his feeling is that two very strong years would be excellent for him. You can see the reasoning."

Thomas played in 10 games last season, making seven tackles, including five for losses and one sack. He was taken out of a redshirt two games into his freshman season and saw limited action in six of the last nine games as well as the Alamo Bowl in 2000.

Thomas is the third left rush end listed on the depth chart, sharing with senior Justin Smith, and will continue to practice with the top units throughout the season, Solich said. With an injury or two at the position, "this could all change, but right now, that's what we're doing."

ONE AMONG MANY

DeJuan Groce now shares the NCAA single-game record for punt return touchdowns with several players, the most recent of whom was Eddie Tillitz of Miami-OH. Tillitz had punt returns of 53 and 82 yards for touchdowns against East Michigan on Sept. 9, 2002.

Groce was a difference-maker, an opinion Troy State Coach Larry Blakeney shared. "Well, we kicked it straight to him and didn't cover him," said Blakeney. "He ought to have been the difference."

"Two times, they looked like twin returns. We kick, don't cover, and he runs down the field very fast and scores. Their offense doesn't have to do anything. They did a great job."

"If you draw one up, you would like to draw one up like that."

Groce had two previous punt returns for touchdowns in his Cornhusker career, both last season, a 60-yarder against Kansas State and a 71-yarder against Miami in the Rose Bowl game.

MARKED IMPROVEMENT

Troy State rushed for a net of minus-25 yards against Nebraska last season. This time, the Trojans rushed for 155 yards, including 61 by sophomore quarterback Hansell Bearden.

"The Blackshirts are good; they are for real," Blakeney said. "We couldn't block them early on any of the running stuff. We finally got the quarterback draw to go for us on two or three occasions."

MORE FRESHMEN IN THE FRAY

True freshmen Matt Herian, a tight end from Pierce, Neb., and Mark LeFlore, a wide receiver from Omaha Central High School, both saw their first action.

They were among 77 players the Cornhuskers used, 56 in the first half.

AWAKENED, FINALLY

Quarterback Jammal Lord explained Nebraska's lackluster offensive performance in the first half. "We were sleeping all the first half, so we had a lot of energy in the second half," he said.

Part of the Cornhuskers' offensive problems was that Troy State "had about 10 guys in the box," said I-back Dahrran Diedrick, who carried 15 times for 63 yards and one touchdown. "They had a lot of people up there trying to stop the run. That's why we got a nice long pass in the first half."

"In the second half, I think we came out and played a lot better."

LUCKY SEVEN

Weakside linebacker Demorrio Williams led the Huskers with seven tackles. Appropriately, the transfer from Kilgore, Texas, Junior College wears a No. 7 jersey.

Middle linebacker Chad Sievers, playing in his first game at Nebraska after transferring from New Mexico State (and sitting out the opener with a knee strain), was credited with six tackles.

FIRST-TIME STARTERS

Senior split end John Klem and freshman cornerback Fabian Washington started for the first time as Huskers. Nebraska opened with five defensive backs. ■

2002 Schedule

1	Aug. 24	Arizona State (1-1), W 48-10	1-0
2	Aug. 31	Troy State (0-1), W 31-16	2-0
3	Sept. 7	Utah State (0-1), 6 p.m.	
4	Sept. 14	@ Penn State (1-0), 7 p.m., ABC	
5	Sept. 28	@ Iowa State (1-1), TBA	
6	Oct. 5	McNeese State (1-0), TBA	
7	Oct. 12	Missouri (1-0), TBA	
8	Oct. 19	@ Oklahoma State (0-1), TBA	
9	Oct. 26	@ Texas A&M (1-0), TBA	
10	Nov. 2	Texas (1-0), TBA	
11	Nov. 9	Kansas (Homecoming) (0-1), TBA	
12	Nov. 16	@ Kansas State (1-0), TBA	
13	Nov. 29	Colorado (0-1), 2:30 p.m., ABC	
	Dec. 7	Big 12 Championship at Houston, Texas, 7 p.m., ABC	

Upcoming Opponents' Schedules

Utah State (0-1)	
Aug. 31	Utah, L 23-3
Sept. 7	@ Nebraska
Sept. 14	Idaho State
Sept. 21	@ Iowa
Sept. 28	@ Boise State
Oct. 4	BYU
Oct. 19	New Mexico
Oct. 26	@ Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 9	New Mexico State
Nov. 16	@ Troy State
Nov. 30	@ Middle Tennessee State

Penn State (1-0)	
Aug. 31	Central Florida, W 27-24
Sept. 14	Nebraska
Sept. 21	Louisiana Tech
Sept. 28	Iowa
Oct. 5	@ Wisconsin
Oct. 12	@ Michigan
Oct. 19	Northwestern
Oct. 26	@ Ohio State
Nov. 2	Illinois
Nov. 9	Virginia
Nov. 16	@ Indiana
Nov. 23	Michigan State

Big 12 at a Glance

Friday, Aug. 30	
Oklahoma, 37, Tulsa 0	
Saturday, Aug. 31	
Nebraska 31, Troy State 16	
Iowa State 45, Kansas 3	
Missouri 33, Illinois 20	
Louisiana Tech 39, Oklahoma State 36	
Texas A&M 31, Louisiana-Lafayette 7	
Texas 27, North Texas 0	
Kansas State 48, Western Kentucky 3	
Colorado State 19, Colorado 14	
California 70, Baylor 22	

Saturday, Sept. 7	
Utah State at Nebraska	
Tennessee Tech at Iowa State	
Ball State at Missouri	
Northern Iowa at Oklahoma State	
Texas A&M at Pittsburgh	
Kansas at UNLV	
Louisiana-Monroe at Kansas State	
San Diego State at Colorado	
Samford at Baylor	
Texas Tech at SMU	
Alabama at Oklahoma	

Game 3

Utah State Sept. 7

Location: Logan, Utah

Enrollment: 21,490

2002 record: 0-1

Coach: Mick Dennehy,
3rd year

Series: Nebraska leads 6-0



6 p.m. CDT

Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Neb.

Aggie to Watch

Wide receiver Kevin Curtis led the country in receptions per game (9.1) and was third in receiving yards (139.2) a year ago. He caught 100 passes for 1,531 yards and 10 touchdowns.



Curtis, who had 6 catches for 98 yards in the 23-3 season-opening loss to Utah, was a walk-on and before 2001 had not played in a game since the 1997 season at Snow Junior College. He went on an LDS church mission in 1998 and 1999 and redshirted in 2000.

Quick Facts

Utah State lost seven games last season, four to nationally ranked teams. The Aggies fell to No. 6 Oregon (38-21), No. 13 LSU (31-14), No. 20 BYU (54-34) and No. 21 Fresno State (70-21).

"Being a new Independent school certainly sets you back as far as schedule," third-year Coach Mick Dennehy said. "But we're getting closer and closer to where we need to be."

Two-year starter Jose Fuentes, a senior, returns to direct the Aggie offense. He threw for 3,100 yards and completed 59.6 percent of his passes last year. Both of those numbers rank third on the Utah State's all-time single-season list.

On Deck

Penn State Sept. 14

Location: University Park, Pa.

Enrollment: 40,828

2002 record: 1-0

Coach: Joe Paterno, 37th year

Series: Penn State leads 6-5

7 p.m. CDT, ABC

Beaver Stadium, University Park, Pa.



Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

SE	9	Wilson Thomas***	6-6	215	Sr.
	19	John Klem**	6-0	210	Sr.
LT	51	Richie Incognito	6-3	295	RFr.
	69	Nick Piovato	6-3	300	So.
LG	78	Mike Erickson*	6-4	295	So.
	55	Junior Tague*1*	6-2	295	Jr.
C	52	John Garrison***	6-4	290	Sr.
	79	Josh Sewell	6-2	300	Jr.
RG	59	Wes Cody**	6-2	305	Sr.
	73	Scott Koethe*8	6-5	290	Sr.
RT	68	Dan Vili Waldrop**	6-5	315	Jr.
	67	Nate Kolterman**	6-3	310	Sr.
TE	99	Aaron Golliday***	6-4	290	Sr.
	86	Kyle Ringenberg*	6-4	240	Sr.
QB	10	Jammal Lord**	6-2	210	Jr.
	16	Mike Stuntz*	6-1	200	So.
FB	4	Judd Davies**	6-0	255	Jr.
	45	Steve Kriewald*	5-10	255	So.
IB	30	Dahrran Dledrick***	6-0	225	Sr.
	22	Cory Ross	5-8	205	RFr.
WB	89	Troy Hassebrook***	6-4	215	Sr.
or	81	Ben Cornelsen**	5-10	190	Sr.
PK	26	Josh Brown***	6-2	190	Sr.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

LR	57	Chris Kelsay***	6-5	255	Sr.
	92	Justin Smith***	6-4	265	Sr.
NT	59	Ryan Bingham*	6-3	280	Jr.
	66	Le Kevin Smith	6-2	300	RFr.
DT	55	Jon Clanton**	6-2	290	Sr.
or	94	Patrick Kabongo**	6-6	305	Jr.
RR	98	Demoin Adams***	6-2	280	Sr.
	88	Trevor Johnson**	6-4	250	Jr.
SLB	43	Scott Shanley***	6-2	240	Sr.
	47	Ira Cooper*	6-2	220	So.
MLB	38	Barrett Ruud*	6-2	240	So.
	54	Chad Sievers	6-3	225	So.
WLB	7	Demorrio Williams	6-1	205	Jr.
or	17	T.J. Hollowell**	6-0	220	Jr.
LCB	28	Pat Ricketts**	5-11	180	Jr.
or	1	Lorneil McPherson*	5-9	175	So.
FS	21	Phillip Bland*	5-11	205	So.
	31	Jerrell Pippens**	6-2	195	Jr.
ROV	2	Aaron Terpening***	5-11	190	Sr.
	40	Lannie Hopkins	6-2	210	So.
RCB	5	DeJuan Groce***	5-10	190	Sr.
	23	Shane Siegel	6-2	215	RFr.
P	19	Kyle Larson	6-0	195	Jr.

UTAH STATE OFFENSE

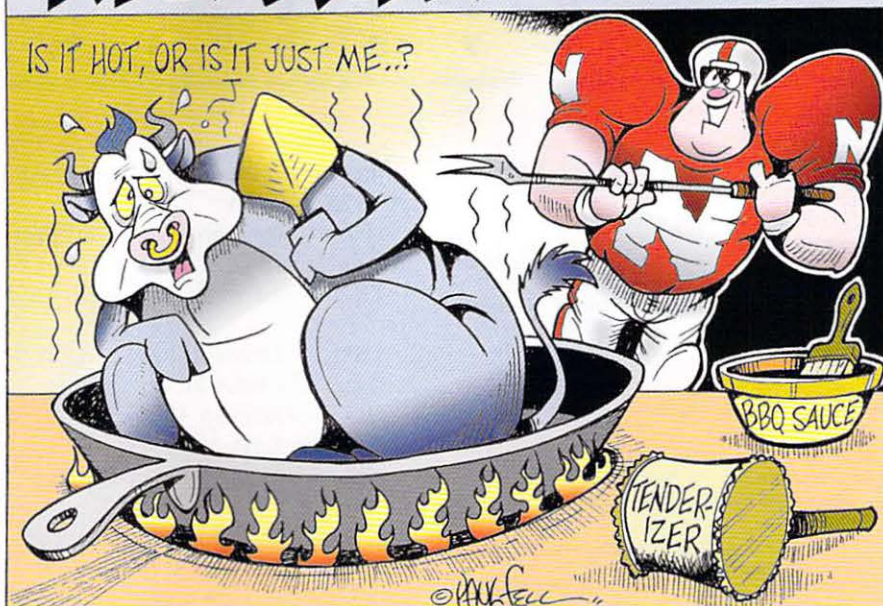
WR	3	Kevin Curtis*	5-11	189	Sr.
	11	Donta Candler	5-11	176	So.
LT	79	Jim Newton***	6-10	298	Sr.
	72	Donald Penn	6-4	287	RFr.
LG	78	Luis Trujillo**	6-2	305	Sr.
	63	Trevor Hutton	6-1	300	Jr.
C	59	Aric Galliano	6-3	278	Jr.
	55	Mike Schepher*	5-11	277	Sr.
RG	77	Greg Vandermade	6-3	291	Jr.
	63	Trevor Hutton	6-1	300	Jr.
RT	74	Grant Calverley	6-4	290	Jr.
	65	Brenen Burningham*	6-7	281	So.
TE	81	Casey Poppinga**	6-5	255	Sr.
	89	Chris Cooley**	6-3	250	Jr.
QB	13	Jose Fuentes**	6-3	221	Sr.
	14	Travis Cox*	6-2	204	So.
TB	39	David Fieff*	5-8	197	Jr.
	28	Roger Robinson*	5-10	187	So.
FB	89	Chris Cooley**	6-3	250	Jr.
	47	Trent Nate*	5-10	224	So.
WR	9	Gary Coleman*	5-9	173	So.
	27	Kenny Coleman	5-10	170	Jr.
K	87	Dane Kidman*	5-10	188	Sr.

UTAH STATE DEFENSE

LE	41	Justin Jackson	6-2	258	Jr.
	94	Jim Fackrell	6-5	234	RFr.
LT	92	Ronald Tupea*	6-1	285	So.
	75	Ryan DeQuillates	6-2	285	RFr.
RT	73	Jorge Tapia**	6-2	290	Jr.
	70	James Robinson*	6-2	265	So.
RE	37	John Chick	6-4	236	Fr.
	99	Jeremy Guenter*	6-4	255	So.
MAC	30	Robert Watts*	6-3	222	So.
	46	Jared Johnston	6-2	217	RFr.
MIK	56	Jesse Busta***	6-2	244	Sr.
	43	Nate Fredrick	6-3	208	Fr.
HER	49	Rodney Wilson**	6-1	213	Jr.
	21	Mike Rosencrans	5-11	191	Jr.
LCB	2	Mark Estelle*	5-9	161	Jr.
	29	Cornelius Lamb	6-3	186	RFr.
S	25	Derrek Shank**	5-10	202	Jr.
	5	Kevin Anderson	6-0	214	Jr.
S	4	Jamar Glasper***	6-1	201	Sr.
	36	Ross Luna*	5-10	192	So.
RCB	10	Ade Jimch**	6-1	190	Sr.
	20	Jerome Dennis*	6-1	188	So.
P	12	Steve Mullins***	6-4	227	Sr.

THE PAUL FELL PREDICTION

NEBRASKA vs. UTAH STATE



SEPTEMBER 7, 2002

AGGIES COME TO THE BIG RED BARBEQUE AS GUESTS OF HONOR BUT END UP AS MAIN COURSE!

PICKS

UTAH STATE AT NEBRASKA

Brian Hill Editor

Utah State has quarterback Jesse Fuentes, who passed for more than 3,000 yards, and wide receiver Kevin Curtis, who caught 100 passes. With that combination, you could expect the Aggies to move the football against a Nebraska team that just might be thinking of the following week in Happy Valley. **Nebraska 50, Utah State 20**

Mike Babcock Contributing Editor

Utah State has an outstanding receiver, a passing quarterback and a suspect defense. What that adds up to is likely to be disaster, unless the

Cornhuskers are caught looking ahead to Penn State, in which case the suspense might last a few minutes longer. But sooner or later Nebraska will roll. **Nebraska 56, Utah State 7**

Terry Douglass Grand Island Independent Sports Editor

Utah State represents one final warm-up for Nebraska before the Cornhuskers take the road for their first big test of the season at Penn State. Don't expect anything fancy from coach Frank Solich's crew, but then again, it shouldn't be necessary. Despite 17 returning Utah State starters, expect Nebraska to dominate throughout. **Nebraska 54, Utah State 17**

BY THE NUMBERS

Nebraska vs. Troy State

Aug. 31, 2002 • Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.

Score By Quarters

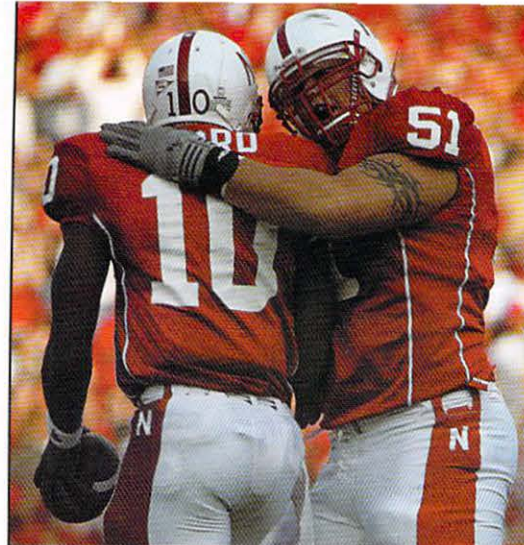
Troy State	0	3	7	6	—	16
Nebraska	7	7	14	3	—	31

Team Stats

	TS	NU
First Downs	16	17
Rushing	11	12
Passing	5	4
Penalty	0	1
Rushing Attempts	41	54
Yards Gained Rushing	188	230
Yards Lost Rushing	33	31
Net Yards Rushing	155	199
Net Yards Passing	192	114
Passes Attempted	29	16
Passes Completed	11	8
Had Intercepted	2	1
Total Plays	70	70
Total Net Yards	347	313
Avg. Gain Per Play	5.0	4.5
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	5-2
Penalties-Yards	4-27	3-25
Punts-Yards	8-270	6-277
Avg. Per Punt	33.8	46.2
Punt Returns-Yards	3-21	2-155
Interceptions-Yards	1-32	2-5
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	1-14	2-50
Possession Time	25:40	34:20

Scoring

NU — Jammal Lord 18-yard run (Josh Brown kick)
NU — DeJuan Groce 83-yard punt return (Brown kick)
TSU — Thomas Olmsted 25-yard field goal
TSU — Jermaine Richardson 6-yard run (Olmsted kick)
NU — Dahrnan Diedrick 1-yard run (Brown kick)
NU — Groce 72-yard punt return (Brown kick)
NU — Brown 34-yard field goal
TSU — Matt Ray 1-yard run (kick failed)
Att. — 77,831
Weather — sunny, clear
Temp. — 86



Tackle Richie Incognito (51) congratulates Jammal Lord after Lord scored Nebraska's first touchdown.

2002 SEASON STATS

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPC	TD
Lord, J.	2	40	195	97.5	1
Diedrick, D.	2	33	142	71.0	2
Ross, C.	2	8	71	35.0	1
Davis, J.	2	5	30	15.0	0
Collins, T.	1	10	22	22.0	0
Davis, J.	2	6	12	6.0	1
Simmons, M.	1	3	9	3.0	0
Kriewald, S.	2	3	7	3.5	0
Grixby, D.	1	1	4	4.0	4
Stuntz, M.	2	3	-3	-1.5	0
Pilkington, R.	2	1	-7	-3.5	0

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lord, J.	2	13-28-1	46.4	147	1
Stuntz, M.	2	0-1-0	0.0	0	0

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPR	TD
Thomas, W.	2	7	39	5.6	19.5	1
Hassebrook, T.	2	2	25	12.5	12.5	0
Bowling, J.	2	1	62	62.0	31.0	0
Diedrick, D.	2	1	11	11.0	5.5	0
Davis, J.	2	1	7	7.0	3.5	0
Ross, C.	2	1	3	3.0	1.5	0

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, J.	2	3	3	42

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Larson, K.	11	441	40.1	57

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Groce, D.	6	185	30.8	83	2

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	5	110	22.0	32	0

Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.
Rudd, B.	2	4	6	10	2-6	0	0
Hollowell, T.	2	2	7	9	0	0	0
Williams, D.	2	5	4	9	1-1	0	0
McPherson, L.	2	4	3	7	1-3	0	0
Kabongo, P.	2	1	5	6	2-17	0	15-17
Bland, P.	2	4	2	6	0	0	0
Sievers, C.	1	2	4	6	1-3	0	0
Clanton, J.	2	3	3	6	0	0	0
Bingham, R.	2	2	3	5	2-2	0	0
Ricketts, P.	2	5	0	5	0	0	0
Smith, J.	2	1	4	5	1-9	0	5-9

TEAM STATISTICS	NU	OPP
Total Offensive Yards	629	605
Plays	142	141
Average Per Play	4.4	4.3
Average Per Game	314.5	303.0
Net Rushing Yards	482	238
Attempts	113	71
TDs Rushing	5	3
Net Passing Yards	147	367
Completions	13	28
Average Per Pass	5.1	5.2
Average Per Catch	11.3	13.1
Average Per Game	73.5	183.5
TDs Passing	1	0
Sacks By-Yards	5-56	3-17
Fumbles-Lost	5-1	3-1
Penalties-Yards	9-67	9-90

Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
NU	10	14	28	27	0	79
Opponents	3	3	14	6	0	26

Individual Statistics

TROY STATE

RUSHING LEADERS

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Bearden, H.	9	61	6.8	23	0
Richardson, J.	7	43	6.1	16	1
Black, L.	15	38	2.5	17	0
Amerson, A.	1	12	12.0	12	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Bearden, H.	9-26-2	34.6	153	0
Ray, M.	2-3	66.7	39	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Samples, J.	3	37	12.3	28	0
Amerson, A.	3	30	10.0	16	0
Rutledge, T.	2	39	19.5	33	0
Skipper, H.	1	60	60.0	60	0
Richardson, J.	1	19	19.0	19	0
Felton, E.	1	7	7.0	7	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Olmsted, T.	8	270	33.8	56

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Amerson, A.	3	21	7.0	15	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Skipper, H.	1	14	14.0	14	0

DEFENSE LEADERS

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Ansley, D.	5	5	10	0	0	0
Moore, D.	6	2	8	1-12	0	0
Williams, G.	3	5	8	0	0	0
Gambao, J.	2	5	7	0	0	0
Yamini, N.	2	5	7	0	0	0
Faulk, J.	4	2	6	1-5	0	0
Reed, R.	2	4	6	1-7	1-32	0
Felton, S.	1	4	5	0	0	0

NEBRASKA

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Lord, J.	23	92	4.0	18	1
Diedrick, D.	15	63	4.2	17	1
Ross, C.	5	27	5.4	11	0
Simmons, M.	3	9	3.0	5	0
Davis, J.	2	8	4.0	5	0
Davis, J.	3	5	1.7	2	0

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Stuntz, M.	1	1	1.0	1.0	1	0
Kriewald, S.	1	1	1.0	1.0	1	0
Pilkington, R.	1	-7	-7.0	0	0	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lord, J.	8-15-1	53.3	114	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Thomas, W.	4	31	7.8	15	0
Bowling, J.	1	62	62.0	62	0
Diedrick, D.	1	11	11.0	11	0
Davis, J.	1	7	7.0	7	0
Ross, C.	1	3	3.0	3	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Larson, K.	6	277	46.2	57

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Groce, D.	2	155	77.5	83	2

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	2	50	25.0	32	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Williams, D.	4	3	7	1-1	0	0
Sievers, C.	2	4	6	1-3	0	0
Hollowell, T.	1	4	5	0	0	0
Bland, P.	3	1	4	0	0	0
Clanton, J.	2	2	4	0	0	0
McPherson, L.	2	1	3	1-3	0	0
Kabongo, P.	1	2	3	1-9	0	1-9
Ricketts, P.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Hassebrook, T.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Kelsay, C.	1	1	2	1-3	0	0
Johnson, T.	1	1	2	1-2	0	0
Shanley, S.	1	1	2	1-1	0	0
Smith, J.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Rudd, B.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Bullocks, D.	0	2	2	1-0	0	0
Bingham, R.	1	0	1	1-1	0	0
Cooper, I.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Pippens, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Bullocks, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Simmons, M.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Groce, D.	0	1	1	0	2-5	0
Siegel, S.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Huston, K.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Ewwaraye, S.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Adams, D.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Adams, T.	0	1	1	0	0	0

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He Came Back

Returning to Nebraska 'great opportunity' for ex-Husker back

By Mike Babcock

When Dave Gillespie returned to Nebraska in 1998, George Darlington welcomed him with good-natured kidding, something on the order of, "The bad penny always comes back."

Gillespie was Coach Tom Osborne's recruiting coordinator from 1986 to 1993, before leaving for Kansas, where he spent four seasons coaching the tight ends and defensive line.

He also had a pair of one-year stints as a Nebraska graduate assistant. And yes, he played for the Cornhuskers, earning three letters (1974-76) as a running back.

He was a member of Osborne's first recruiting class in 1973. And he was one of Darlington's first two recruits as a Nebraska assistant — which is the essential fact here.

"Everybody makes a mistake," Darlington said, joking again.

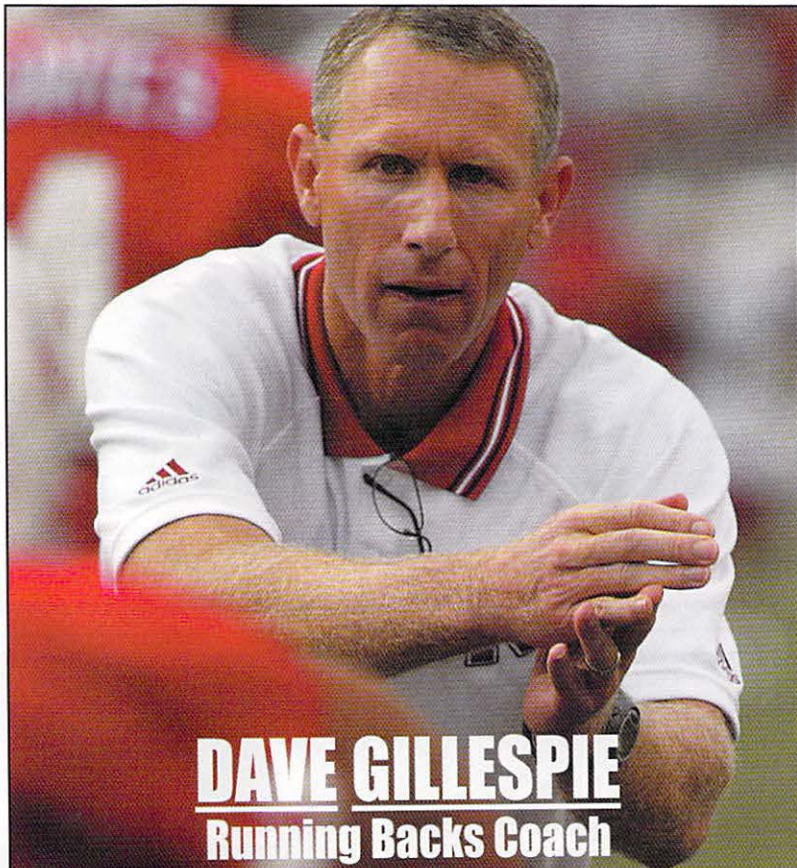
Darlington had been on the staff at San Jose State when it was fired following the 1972 season, and Gillespie played high school football in suburban San Jose, Calif.

"That's probably why I got to come here," said Gillespie.

He also was joking, and being modest about a high school career that attracted recruiting interest not only from Nebraska but also from Division I schools on the West Coast, including UCLA.

Gillespie would have been the first Darlington recruit to sign a letter of intent with Nebraska had it not been for Bob Hayes, an offensive lineman from Bakersfield, Calif.

On national letter-of-intent signing day, Darlington picked up Hayes' let-



DAVE GILLESPIE
Running Backs Coach
Fifth Year
Alma Mater: Nebraska, 1977
Game-Day: Press Box
Recruit Area: Midwest, No. California

Scott Traub

ter in the morning and then made the five-hour drive north to Saratoga, Calif., to get Gillespie's letter.

"I felt confident that Dave and his parents would hang tough about coming to Nebraska," Darlington said. "Not that I didn't believe Bob, but I thought there might be more pressure on him."

UCLA also was recruiting Hayes, who was reluctant to leave his girlfriend in California.

As it turned out, Homer Smith, an assistant to Pepper Rodgers at UCLA, visited the Gillespie home on the night

before letters of intent could be signed. The visit was to no avail, however.

"Fortunately, Dave stayed with coming here," said Darlington.

Gillespie and Hayes were among five high school athletes from California in the 1973 scholarship recruiting class. The others were quarterback Randy Garcia from Los Angeles and linemen Greg Fields from San Francisco and Scott Hertenstein from West Covina.

Osborne described it as a "banner year" for Nebraska in California.

There was understandable pressure on him to go to a school closer to home. "But once Nebraska entered the picture, from a prestige standpoint, no one competed with them," Gillespie said.

The Cornhuskers had won national championships in 1970 and 1971, and "I felt like if I was going to play college football, I might as well play with the best program, the best people," he said.

His ability was such that he was among a handful of freshmen invited to report early with the varsity; the NCAA had just changed its rules, allowing freshmen to play varsity football.

So in the late summer, he and his parents made the three-day drive to Lincoln. Then his parents turned right around and drove back. "They literally just dropped me off," said Gillespie.

"They pulled into town, pulled up to the stadium, dropped me off and drove home. I think my mom wanted it that way so she wouldn't cry in front of me, probably."

Gillespie was among the team's fastest players, but he was plagued by a leg injury throughout his career.

As a senior in 1976, he carried only 15 times, scoring two touchdowns.

He was already planning to become a coach during his playing career. His father had been a high

school football coach, though not his, and "that's what I grew up with," he said.

"Once you got past the stage that you were going to be a policeman or a fireman, as a little kid, when you really started thinking about it, coaching is what I wanted to do."

So after going to training camp twice with the Pittsburgh Steelers as a free agent, he began his coaching career, first as a Cornhusker graduate assistant and then at Lincoln High, where he was an assistant football coach and head coach of the girls' track and field team.

He also was the head football coach at Hastings, Neb., High for two seasons before returning to Nebraska as a graduate assistant for a second time. When Steve Pederson, the recruiting coordinator, left a year later, Gillespie replaced him. But in 1994, when the NCAA changed its rules, requiring recruiting coordinators to count against a program's limit of full-time coaches, Gillespie went to Kansas.

When Frank Solich replaced Osborne as head coach following the 1997 season, Gillespie returned again, this time to succeed Solich as running backs coach. Working under Coach Glen Mason at Kansas "was a good situation," said Gillespie. "But this was a great opportunity."

Though he wanted to be a football

coach for as long as he could remember, "I never really thought at the college level," he said. "I always pictured myself in high school coaching."

His coaching influences have included his father, his high school coach, Osborne, Solich and Mike Corgan, the Cornhuskers' gruff running backs coach, who came with Bob Devaney from Wyoming and continued in that position until he retired and was replaced by Solich in 1983.

"You find things in everyone that you incorporate," Gillespie said.

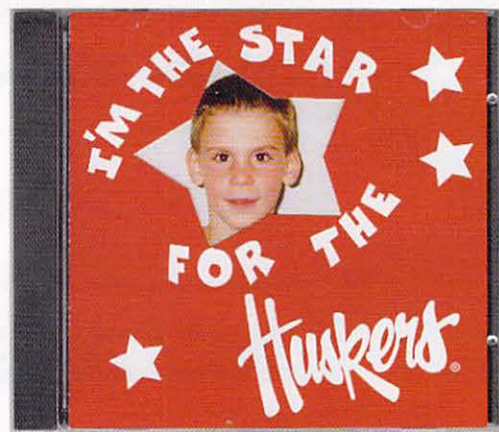
Some are simply a function of a coach's own personality. For example, Nebraska is stocked with running backs this season, which makes his job both easier and more difficult.

It's difficult "trying to communicate with them to a degree that they understand why they're where they're at," said Gillespie. "Some guys, you're going to have to say some things to them where you're really going to disappoint them. When you become attached to people, that's hard to do."

"It's tough to see guys down over that kind of thing. That's hits me hard."

The relationship between a player and the coach who recruits him can be the same way.

"We kid around a little bit," Darlington said of the "bad penny" that came back. All in good fun. ■



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<input type="checkbox"/> Colorado	\$1,855,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Memphis	\$550,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Oregon State	\$845,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Washington	\$1,900,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Colorado State	\$1,110,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Miami-Florida	\$2,200,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Penn State	\$1,460,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Washington State	\$1,725,000
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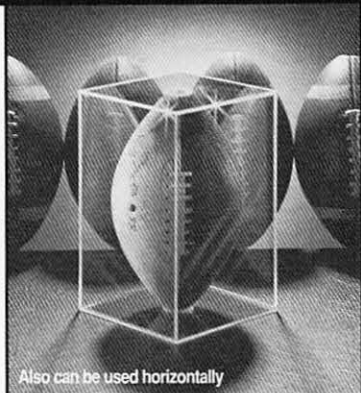
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It Feels Right

Focused Cepero ready to put it all together during her senior year

By Todd Henrichs

Simply being Greichaly Cepero isn't as easy as you might think.

Sure it's normal to envy Cepero's star power, her God-given athletic prowess and wide smile, all that make her the most recognized of Husker female athletes these days.

It's a role Cepero accepts, if not embraces.

But pity the closest thing NU has to a superstar for the decisions she's faced.

Volleyball or basketball?

Setter or spiker?

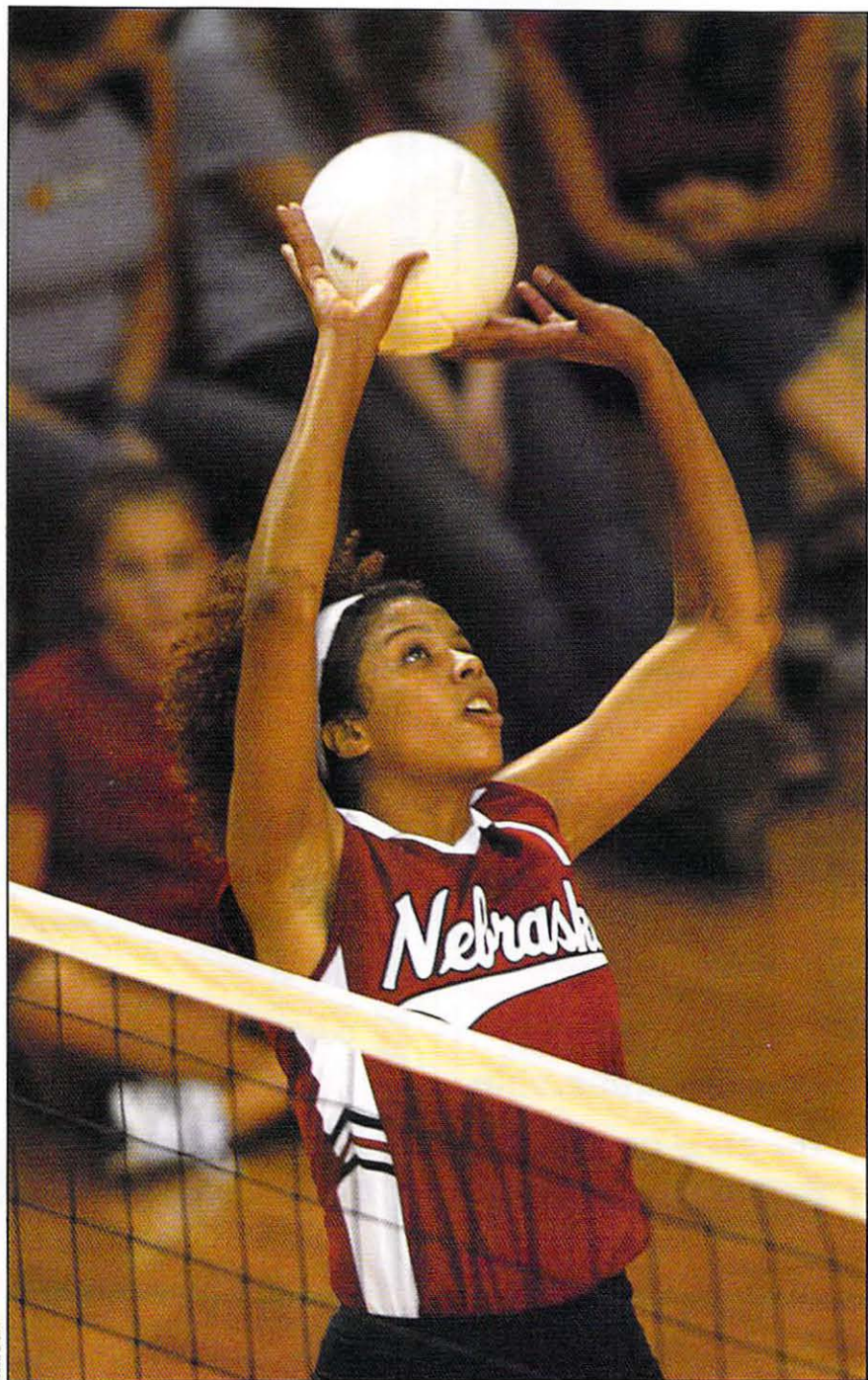
Puerto Rico or the U.S.?

Sure it's only a game, but athletics are what Cepero has been all about since the day she was born to parents Juan and Maria Febres in the Caribbean summer of 1981.

At home, the word "Greicha" means Greece, an intended reference to the birthplace of the Olympic Games. In 2004, the Olympics return to Athens, and Cepero intends to be there.

Her orientation with the U.S. National Team came this offseason and suddenly the answers to all the tough questions became easier.

"That's always been one of my dreams, so obviously being there this summer just gave me the opportunity to see what level is out there and what level I'm at right now compared to where I need to be to be competitive at that level," Cepero said.



Greichaly Cepero, the 2000 AVCA Player of the Year, is 65-2 as a starter and has led Nebraska to back-to-back appearances in the NCAA final four.

"That's one of the things I'm looking forward to in my future."

Still guarded in many ways,

Cepero won't just come right out and say it. But Nebraska Coach John Cook is convinced the decision has

been made for the star setter.

Her future in the Olympics, even as a professional athlete overseas, rests as a volleyball player.

Ever since the last Nebraska season ended, Cook heard the same thing wherever he traveled in volleyball circles.

The expert observers and the rival coaches all said Nebraska's All-American setter wasn't at her best last season.

Nebraska still made it to the final four a year ago, but Cook believes a less divided, more-focused Cepero might be what it takes to regain the national championship.

"Last year, there was a lot of interference, whether that was the expectations, the pressure or trying to be a two-sport athlete," Cook said. "I think that's all gone."

"She's a premier setter, and she'll have international experience now. When her talent and passion come out, that's what everyone wants to see."

Cook calls it "magic" and has no doubt that Cepero's flair was in large part responsible for the championship in his first NU season. It's

also made Cepero who she is in the eyes of NU fans.

Surrounded by two teammates who have also earned All-American honors and another that was the national player of the year out of high school, Cepero is still unrivaled as the most popular Husker among Big Red followers.

The young girls in ponytails crowd around her anytime there's a chance for an autograph.

The player, who at 6-foot-1 redefined the setting position in collegiate volleyball, continues to play basketball at NU. The past summer, however, is the first time Cepero did not commit weeks to training on the basketball court.

Her summer vacation was trips to Japan, Switzerland, Mexico and Russia, all brilliant opportunities for a student of international business, but more significantly chances to compete against the best volleyball players in the world.

She trained daily, only beginning to refine a setting style. Her technique, Cepero hopes, will more closely imitate the best Asian players.

Just the consistency of playing volleyball all summer and not dabbling in dribbling has paid dividends, her teammates say.

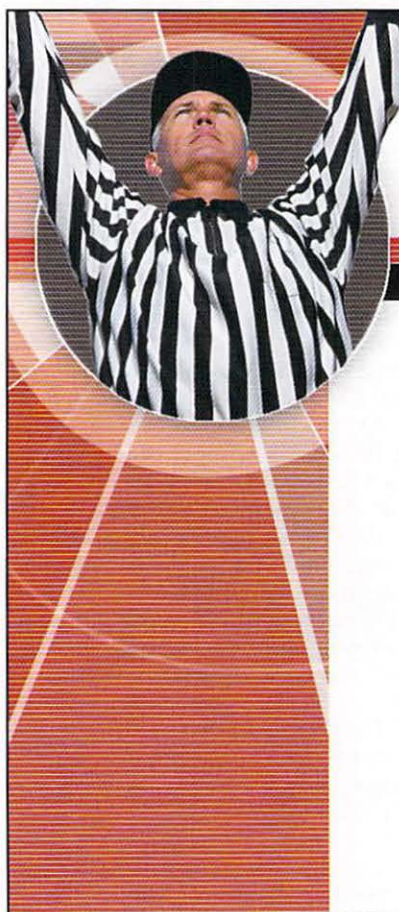
Cook said his second-ranked Huskers were well ahead of where they normally might be opening a season.

"She has come into two-a-days already putting the ball right there, and her defense is smooth," senior Laura Pilakowski said. "I think it's really helped a lot that she was out there playing."

Cook senses a new confidence that the game appears somehow slower to her now. An unquestioned competitor, Cepero sees everything coming together for an outstanding season.

"This summer was one of the best experiences I've had since I started playing sports," Cepero said. "It's gone pretty fast here, but it feels right. Like it's time."

"This is the last year, and next year I can move on to the next level. And because it's my last season, it's kind of special. It's just exciting to be out there and to try to finish it the best we can." ■



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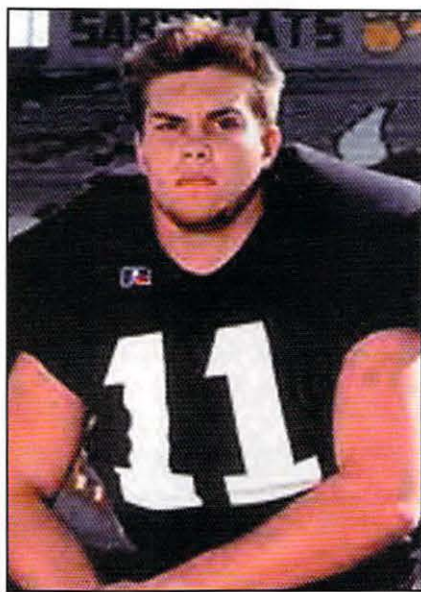
**Nebraska
looks to build
depth at rush
end positions**

By Doug Horwich

Nebraska has struggled somewhat over the past few seasons in recruiting rush ends.

Despite signing two prospects in last year's class, depth at the position is somewhat thin going into the 2003 season, as the Huskers lose seniors Chris Kelsay, Demoiné Adams and Justin Smith. Additionally, Trevor Johnson will be a senior next year and Benard Thomas, who is redshirting, will be a junior, so the pressure is on the Husker staff to bring in at least 2-3 quality rush end prospects in the 2003 class.

Nebraska's attacking 4-3 defense relies on pressure from the edges,



Kyle Caldwell of Saguaro High School in Scottsdale, Ariz., has Nebraska on his early list of favorites.

and good pass rushers are not easy to find.

The Huskers already have received an oral commitment from Omaha Central's Brandon Teamer (6-foot-5, 260 pounds, 4.9 time in the 40-year dash), but their search for pass rushing talent continues.

One player currently receiving a great deal of attention from the Husker staff is Kyle Caldwell (6-3, 270, 4.8) from Saguaro High School in Scottsdale, Ariz., the same school that produced former Husker safety Mike Brown.

Caldwell has Nebraska on his early list of favorites and has been offered by the Huskers.

"I haven't been to Nebraska yet, but I'm excited to take a trip there," he said. "They have such a winning tradition. They're always competing for national championships."

He also knows about the facilities in Lincoln.

"I like how they've changed their playing surface to that new Field Turf stuff because I hate AstroTurf," Caldwell said. "Everyone knows about their weight program, and their health and nutrition program is probably the best in the country."

Caldwell has more than 20 written offers already and is fielding calls from coaches all over the country.

"About 47 schools came to our spring drills," he said. "There have been 30-40 schools that have called me. On the first day of the May calling period, 25 schools called me. It was a mess. I couldn't even talk to them all. My mom has been helping me filter my calls. It has all been a little overwhelming at times. I'm just trying to take it all in."

Despite drawing interest from so many programs, five schools are currently receiving the bulk of his attention.

"This could change as time goes on, but right now my top five is still Oregon, UCLA, Nebraska, Arizona State and Notre Dame," Caldwell said.

Caldwell is likely to take all five of his visits, though his parents would

Nebraska Commitments for 2003

Player	Hometown (school)	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.
Greg Austin	Cypress, Texas	6-2	275	OL
Andy Birkel	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	180	WR
Steve Craver	Hurst, Texas	6-2	195	DB
Josh Mueller	Columbus (Lakeview), Neb.	6-7	250	TE
*Trevor Neeman	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	225	TE/DE
*Kade Pittman	North Platte, Neb.	6-0	190	RB/DB
Bo Ruud	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	210	LB
Brandon Teamer	Omaha (Central), Neb.	6-5	256	DT

*scheduled to enter school in the fall of 2002 as part-time students and receive scholarships in January 2003.

prefer that he attend in-state Arizona State.

"Even though my parents went to ASU, they aren't putting any pressure on me to go there," he said. "My dad, mom and grandfather are going to help me whittle down my choices. I plan to take all of my trips, and distance won't be a factor at all for me."

Another top national rush end prospect who likes the Huskers is Claude "Turk" McBride (6-4, 235, 4.55) from Woodrow Wilson High School in Camden, N.J.

McBride has been offered by Nebraska, and the interest is mutual.

"I just like their program," he said. "I know that they have a hard program and on the straight and narrow. I like that."

As a junior, McBride registered 60 tackles and 16 sacks, in addition to three fumble recoveries. He also blocked four field goals and returned two of his fumble recoveries for touchdowns. On offense, he had 24 catches for 486 yards and nine touchdowns.

While some schools are recruiting McBride as a linebacker, Nebraska is among the schools that like him as a rush end.

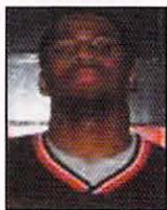
In addition to the Huskers, McBride has received offers from Boston College, Iowa, Maryland, Oregon, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Tennessee and West Virginia. He plans to take all five of his official visits, and Nebraska figures to get one. McBride is also looking to visit Miami, Clemson, Oregon and Tennessee.

The State of Texas produces an enormous volume of talented players, and Nebraska appears to be focusing heavily on the Lone Star State this year.

One player who received an early offer from the Husker staff is Tim Crowder (6-4, 227, 4.6) from John Tyler High School in Tyler, Tex. John Tyler is a perennial powerhouse program that produces Division I prospects on an annual basis.

Although most John Tyler prospects end up attending an in-state program, Nebraska has secured the first visit from this top national prospect.

"I've already set up an official visit to Lincoln for Dec. 13-15," Crowder said. "That is the only visit I've set up so far. The coaches [at Nebraska] are good. I see that their



Claude McBride

Huskers Steal 2 Early from Lone Star State; Others Might Follow

By Rick Shaw

The Nebraska football team has always ventured into Texas in an attempt to nab a few recruiting plums. Former Husker All Americans Turner Gill, Travis Hill, Jake Young, and Keyou Craver are among the many Texas high school players who chose to play their college football in Lincoln.

The Huskers are off to a solid recruiting start in the Lone Star State in 2002. Two Texas prepsters have already given Nebraska coaches their pledge to sign next February, and several others are listing the Huskers among their early favorites.

— Steve Craver, a 6-foot-2, 195-pound outside linebacker prospect from L.D. Bell High School in Hurst, Texas, gave his pledge to Husker coaches in June. The swift and athletic Craver (4.5-second 40-yard dash and 335-pound bench press) chose to follow the path of his older brother, former Nebraska All-America cornerback Keyou Craver. He chose Nebraska after considering offers from Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Colorado.

"Being the little brother of a Nebraska Cornhusker, I've always had my eye on Nebraska," Craver said. "I want to keep the name going. I know that by doing my part and doing my job that they will take care of me. I have no questions in my mind."

"I just want my Blackshirt. I want everyone to know that I am Keyou's brother, but that I am an athlete and a competitor, too."

— Greg Austin, a 6-2, 275-pound offensive line prospect from Cy-Fair High School in Cypress, Texas, committed to Nebraska in mid-July. Austin, with a 400-pound bench press and 525 squat, may be one of the biggest sleepers in Texas heading into the 2002 season. He attended the Nebraska camp in June and caught the eye of the Husker coaches. Nebraska was his first offer, although he had been receiving recruiting attention from LSU, Texas Tech, Oklahoma State and others.

"I got my scholarship offer in the mail from Nebraska on July 5," Austin said. "I was so shocked and excited. I wanted to commit right away. I mean, it's a once in a lifetime opportunity for any high school football player to play at Nebraska."

— John Tyler High School in Tyler, Texas, is home to one of the top three defensive ends in the country. Tim Crowder, a 6-4, 227-pound pass rushing specialist, is being pursued by colleges from across the nation. Nebraska headlines his list of early favorites.

"There's something about the Cornhuskers," Crowder said. "I like the weight program there, and they have a lot of people leaving this year at my position. I already have a visit set up to Lincoln on Dec. 13."

— Ofa Mohtau, a 6-foot-3, 335-pound guard from Trinity High in Euless, also lists Nebraska among his early favorites. Mohtau, who is currently ranked as the No. 1 offensive guard prospect in the country by Rivals.com, has a visit scheduled to Lincoln for January.

"I don't like the type of atmosphere where there are a lot of things going on all of the time," Mohtau said. "Lincoln is kind of spread out. That's what I like. That would be a perfect atmosphere for me." ■

top defensive end units are all upperclassmen and that getting playing time early will be possible there. I've been studying the depth charts of my favorites and the coaches."

Although he's being pursued by all of the Texas schools, Crowder is giving serious thought to leaving the state for college.

"Distance won't be a problem for me," he said. "I like both in-state and out-of-state schools. I'm leaning a little bit to getting out of Texas. It's just too hot down here."

Despite this leaning, Crowder's father would like to see his son to stay in-state.

"My dad wants me to stay in Texas, and my mom will be happy wherever I go, as long as I get a college education," he said.

Like McBride, Crowder is being recruited by some schools as a rush end and by others as an outside linebacker. Nebraska coaches like him as a rush end and feel that he can grow into the position.

"Almost all of the schools are recruiting me to play defensive end," he said. "It really doesn't matter, but I'm kind of leaning toward playing defensive end. I'm continu-

ing to grow, and it seems like it might be my more natural position."

Crowder is an outstanding athlete, and also has advanced technique for a high school player.

"I have a good combination of strength and speed," he said. "I like to keep the opponent off-balance on the field. I have a lot of different moves that I throw at you."

Teams hoping to secure an early commitment from Crowder are going to be disappointed, as the talented prospect has no intention of "rushing" the process and would like to take all five of his official visits.

"I'm probably going to make my decision on signing day," he said. "I want to see which team stays with me through all this and which team doesn't rush me. The way I figure it, if a team really wants me, they'll save a scholarship for me."

Crowder is being recruited by Husker assistant Turner Gill, a standout at Fort Worth Arlington Heights High School who was recruited to Nebraska in 1980.

"I like Coach Gill," Crowder said. "Everybody loves Nebraska — players and fans. They are on TV almost every week." ■

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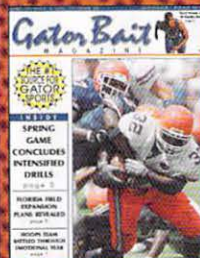
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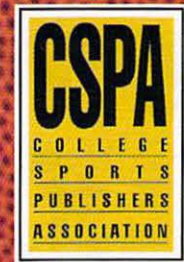
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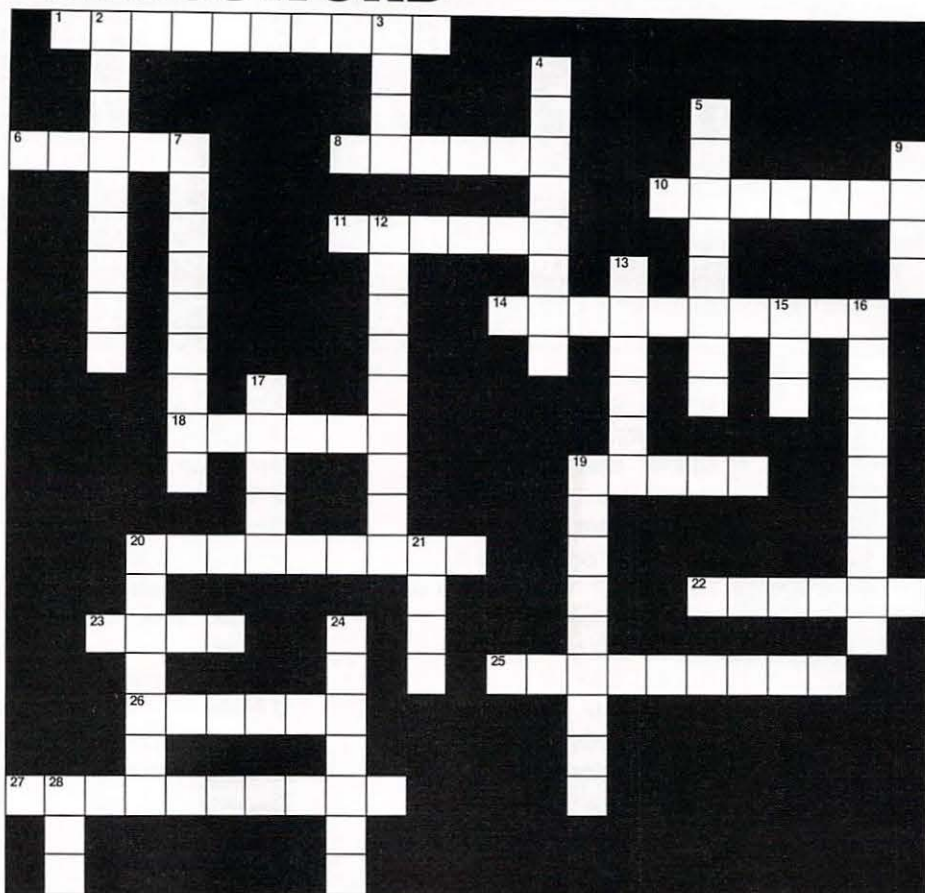
ACROSS

- 1 NU's No. 2 (offense)
- 6 2001 national champion
- 8 NU's No. 11 (defense)
- 10 NU's No. 94 (defense)
- 11 Utah State nickname
- 14 Returned interception for TD vs. Arizona State
- 18 Caught touchdown pass vs. ASU
- 19 NU's Nov. 2 opponent
- 20 NU had 0 in opener
- 22 Scored NU's first TD this season
- 23 NU's No. 22 (offense)
- 25 NU's first road opponent
- 26 Chris Kelsay's hometown
- 27 Had NU's first 2 receptions vs. ASU

DOWN

- 2 NU's first Big 12 opponent
- 3 DeJuan Groce's homestate
- 4 NU's No. 11 (offense)
- 5 Troy State coach
- 7 NU's No. 51 (offense)
- 9 NU's leading rusher vs. Arizona State
- 12 NU's running backs coach
- 13 Returned blocked punt for TD vs. ASU
- 15 Head coach before Frank
- 16 Jammal Lord's homestate
- 17 Utah State location
- 19 NU's No. 2 (defense)
- 20 Troy State's nickname
- 21 NU's leading tackler vs. ASU
- 24 Utah State coach
- 28 Network for Penn State game

Answers in Sept. 14 issue



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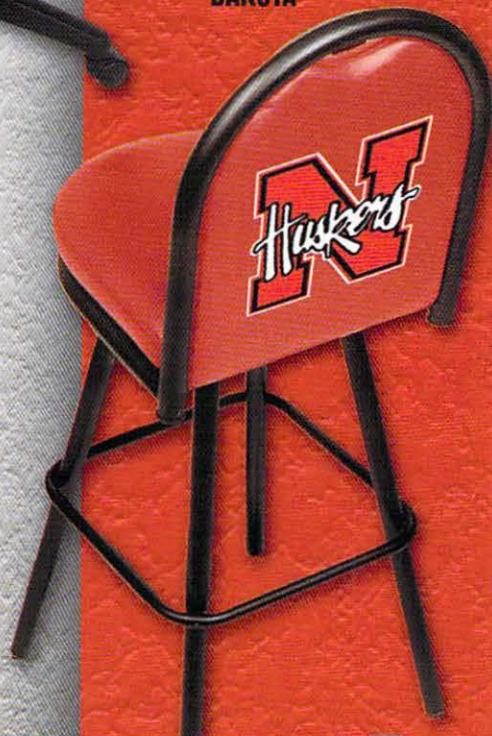
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A Minor Distraction

Solich says he didn't explain Collins' situation to the team until Saturday morning



**Mike
BABCOCK**

THE ISSUE WAS A FOOTNOTE to Nebraska's 31-16 victory against Troy State. But its significance was such that Coach Frank Solich addressed it first during his post-game news conference.

Senior I-back Thunder Collins watched from the sideline in street clothes because of a suspension for what a sports information office release distributed before the game called "undisclosed reasons."

Solich was no more specific about the situation afterward.

"What we had was enough information to suspend Thunder for a game," he said. "We're still looking at the matter, so we'll see what takes place as far as future games and how that might work."

"Really, I'm not going to get into what the situation is."

Collins' playing status became an issue on the Thursday before the game, as a result of Internet rumors. Solich seemed surprised when asked about Collins after practice but was non-committal in answering questions. He responded in a similar way before Friday's walk-through.

"Just so you understand, the information we gathered that called for the one-game suspension was not really gathered and determined until Friday afternoon," he said after the game.

"So it was rather late in terms of being able to announce anything. My first thought was the team and, of course, the preparation for the game. The day of the game, I want them to wake up in the morning and not have headlines, thinking about anything else other than Troy State."

Solich said he didn't explain the situation to the team until Saturday morning.

Collins' suspension wasn't a "major distraction," he said. "I didn't see a football team that was standing around, questioning themselves or their teammates."

Also, Collins' absence didn't significantly affect the offensive game plan, he said.

In retrospect, that probably would have been an easy answer to a difficult question as to why the Cornhuskers didn't look better on offense than they did against Arizona State the week before — if they looked as good, a position for which a reasonable case could have been made.

The total yardage was essentially the same, but Nebraska, which was turnover-free in the opener, lost two-of-five fumbles and threw a pass interception against Troy State. The turnovers, and even the fumbles that weren't lost, broke the Cornhuskers' offensive continuity.

A veteran Troy State defense was part of the problem.

"We knew it would not be easy moving the football," said Solich.

And it wasn't, particularly in the first half, when Kyle Larson punted five times. "The first half was really kind of discouraging for us," Solich said. "We'll continue to get better."

"But we've got to get finer in a lot of areas."

DeAntae Grixby also was on the sideline in street clothes because of a bone bruise in his left knee, suffered during practice early in the week. Though not a starter, the junior from Omaha was used as a fullback in the wing set against Arizona State, with positive results.

Solich didn't have that option against Troy State.

Jammal Lord again showed his ability to improvise, to make something out of nothing when he's running. But his passing was as inconsistent as the week before.

That he has a strong arm can't be questioned. Late in the first quarter, after Jon Clanton forced a Troy State fumble that Pat Ricketts recovered at the Cornhusker 14-yard line, Lord hit a wide-open Jon Bowling in stride on a pass play good for 62 yards. Four plays later, however, on first-and-goal from the Troy State 10-yard line, a mix-up with his receiver led to an interception in the end zone.

In the spring, Solich said Lord had the look of a "big-time" passer sometimes and other times not. Whatever the case, he needs to be able to pass enough to alleviate the pressure on himself.

He's a "tough young man," said Solich. But 23 carries are too many.

"We'd like to get it to where that number is cut down," Solich said.

Middle linebacker Barrett Ruud, who played the second half with a broken hand, gave the offense a vote of confidence. "There's going to be a game where the offense takes care of us," he said.

To emphasize his confidence, he added, "big time."

Rush end Chris Kelsay agreed.

"I think our offense is going to be fine," he said.

Kelsay, a senior co-captain, deferred to Solich when asked about Collins. "I'm not going to really comment on that," said Kelsay. "I wish him the best, and hope he comes back."

The situation was fluid after the game.

"At this point in time, just so you know, we are continuing to look into the situation and we'll take whatever appropriate action that we need to take," Solich said.

"It will all be internal until there is a time to possibly lay it all out for you." ■



**Thunder Collins was
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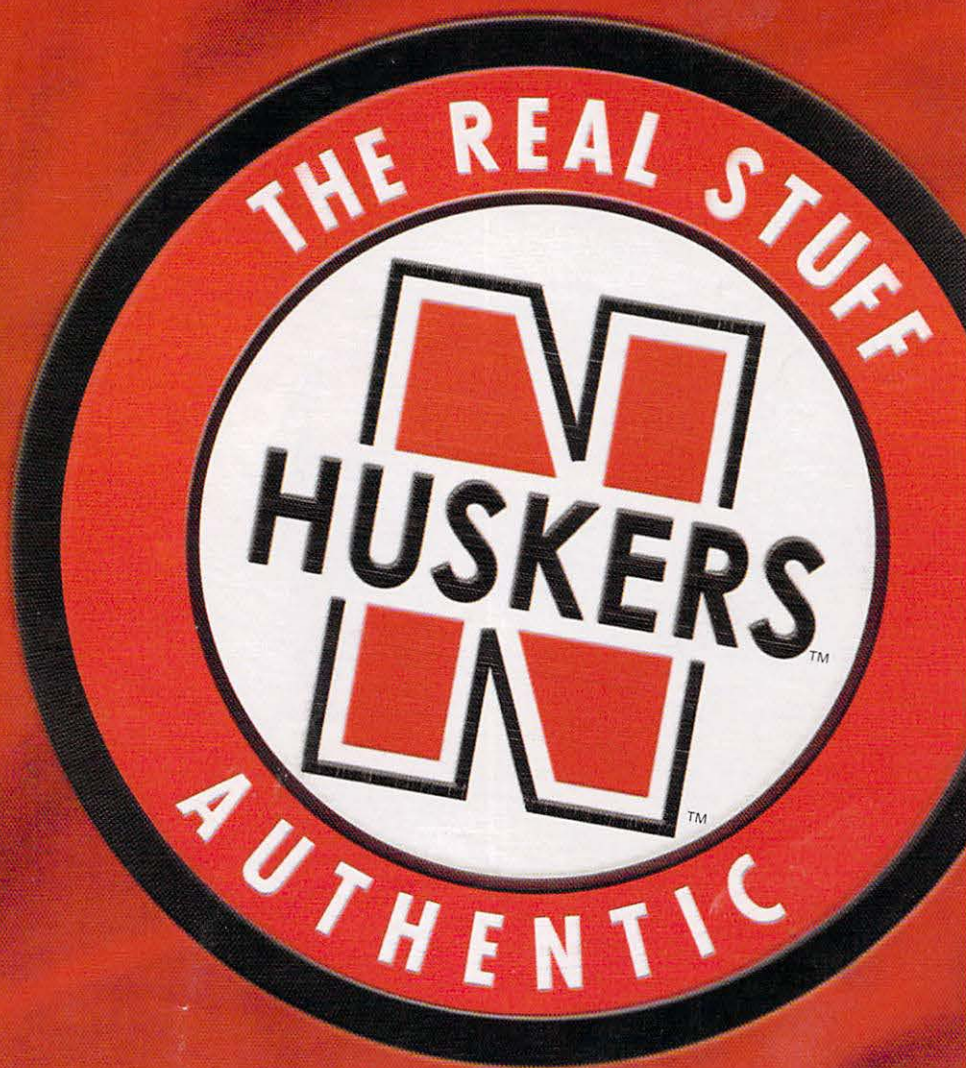
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